



CLASP

Community Landscape & Archæology Survey Project NEWSLETTER

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Local Heritage *initiative*

February 2015, Issue 21

From Rob Close , Chairman of the Organising Committee

Hi

I became Chairman of the Organising Committee in October 2014, succeeding Dave Hayward. Most of my archaeology work has been at Barby but I have carried out magnetometry at five other sites and I learnt about excavation and context at Whitehall.

Role of the Organising Committee

The Organising Committee has in its last few meetings reviewed its terms of reference and confirmed that its role is:

- To confirm each year the priority archaeological projects for CLASP and to ensure that these are appropriately resourced.
- To manage all other projects delegated to it by the Board of Trustees
- To ensure effective two way communication between CLASP and the membership societies as well as the individual members of CLASP.

2015 Projects

At its January meeting the Committee reviewed the three projects proposed by Steve Young, Archaeological Director. These are:

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- Norton: Trial trenching to classify, establish extent and chronology of stone structures and field systems
- Harpole: Open area excavation of part of the west wing of the Barnclose
- Roman Villa to examine the surviving archaeological stratigraphy and the extent of any possible surviving mosaic pavements.
- Paulerspury: Trial trenching, test pitting and field walking of a Villa and possible early temporary marching camp of the Roman period.

The exact timing of each will depend on the harvesting of crops and the resulting availability of the fields. It is expected that most of the work will take place in August and early September but may start in July if possible. If any reading this article would like to register an interest in any or all of the projects please contact Sandra Deacon on sandydeacon@hotmail.com.

I do hope that everyone who can takes the opportunity to get involved.

Best wishes

Rob Close

From Dave Hayward, Chairman of Trustees

This is my first contribution since I was elected to my role as Chair of Trustees. Having been with CLASP since it's inception over ten years ago I have seen it grow in size, scope of the work it undertakes and probably most importantly in credibility across the wider archaeological community. It is therefore a great responsibility to ensure we maintain our position and continue to grow in stature.

To achieve this we must ensure that we move forward in a structured way. I am keen to ensure that the CLASP Strategy Document is fully and effectively implemented in a realistic time-scale. The Trustees have already implemented the Research Projects Sub-Strategy and active work is being undertaken on Marketing, Membership and Financial issues. We will review our progress at

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our next meeting in April.

Something else that we must ensure is maintained is giving proper recognition and support to our membership leading on various projects and work disciplines. These initiatives provide the strength to the organisation by developing an involved team working to a common aim. Just to give some examples I must mention, in no specific order of importance, work being taken by Fred Kay to push forward geophysical work at Bannaventa, Gren Hatton's work on leading our input in the National Hill-fort Mapping Project and other work at Barby Hill and elsewhere into the Iron Age, our colleagues at Towcester, Gina Boreham, Rod Conlon and others into researching and defining the Romano-British hinterland around Towcester.

Mention must also be made of Tony Kesten's work in maintaining our relationship with Milton Keynes Historical Association and also his efforts to ensure our written material is grammatically correct and Angela Evans who keeps us on a straight financial course.

Lastly it is also important to recognise the work undertaken by our member societies either by way of keeping the efforts of CLASP known in their areas or, as with our two metal detecting groups, NARC and NNPAST, discovering more and more about west Northamptonshire in a structured and efficient manner. Stephen Young's commitment as Archaeological Director is there at all times to keep us on a realistic path, much of his work being behind the scenes but still vitally important to our success.

If I have left you out it is not intentional, just that I am perhaps not aware myself of everything that you all do. Thank you all!

Dave Hayward

February 2015

From Steve Young, Archaeological Director

Whitehall Farm volunteers have continued to undertake post-excavation work on preparing and analysing the assemblages and field record of the Whitehall Farm Roman Villa Research Excavation. Currently this remains a central element of our archaeological activities which allows those involved to continue to widen their skills base and understanding of the archaeological process.

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The production of a digital archive and further work towards publication is progressing slowly but surely. Several tasks are underway and these focus on the computerised ‘mapping’ of the site and the better integration of disparate elements of the extensive photographic and planning archaeological record. This is being done in an appropriate digital format that will complement the existing traditional ‘hardcopy’ archiving approach and improve CLASP’s ability to meet our archaeological responsibilities in the final dissemination of our finding.

The post-excavation activities revolve around the digitisation of plans and sections for utilisation and interpretation in the GIS programme MapInfo which is an essential tool in the visualisation of the archaeological record. The process as envisaged although initially laborious is gathering pace as the volunteers experience and capability improve through practice. This technique will be allied to the use of Meta data to highlight the link between the photographic and planning record to speed up the process of interpretation. It will also result in a more compact digital archive as well as enabling the different forms of information to be related to each other without needing to resort to duplicating data with a range of operational programmes. Something we must try to keep in mind when dealing with such a huge volume of archaeological information if we hope to understand the diverse range of data. Fortunately we already possess a very good digital plans and sections index, context matrices and context and feature listings that support this work as it progresses.

In addition a certain amount of physical reorganisation of the diverse assemblages is also underway in order to facilitate future access to particular materials and collections required for dating and phasing the excavation. This will aid the process of illustration and provide the capability for a systematic approach to such work. The more time and effort spent improving the organization of this element of the project will result in a more accessible and integrated digital archive. It has also been possible, thanks to Don Martin, to transcribe slides from the earliest year of the excavation into a collection of more readily usable digital images which can be added to the extensive photographic archive and viewed more easily. Both the transition of images and the use of Meta data demonstrate our commitment and understanding of the important issue of maintaining a digital record in an accessible format appro-

priate to changes and developments in computing. It is a testament to the skill and experience of our volunteers that this work is carried out to such a high level and will I'm sure result in a professional presentation of the excavation's findings.

A series of pamphlets are being prepared to explain the outcome of several of the CLASP initiatives the first of which will outline the collaborative effort with the Whitehall Farm Roman Villa & Landscape Project to describe the archaeological story of the Romano British settlement at Whitehall Farm. These are designed to highlight our archaeological findings in an informative and accessible way hopefully helping not only to inform CLASP volunteers of the meaning of fieldwork undertaken but to widen the knowledge about our activities among the general public who may wish then to become involved.

The analysis of the glass assemblage and its significance particularly within the contexts associated with Room 3b of Bathhouse 1 is continuing to indicate an emphasis on drinking vessels. This has considerable implications concerning the rationale behind their deposition and original use. It leads us to hypothesise about the existence of a social culture that enjoyed or indulged in feasting and over consumption. Typical one may feel of what we might expect to find amongst the archaeological remains of a leisure facility constructed to meet the needs of a social elite bent on hunting and recreation consistent with the lifestyle of landowners of large *latifundia* as outlined in previous newsletters. One further hint of luxury is suggested by several newly identified fragments of silver backed glass which denote the existence of a mirror or hand glass for personal grooming. A rare artefact which was vastly superior to the more commonly available polished bronze mirrors in use during the Roman period.

In December a small scale rescue excavation was undertaken near Bannaventa (Whilton Lodge). A cable trench was being excavated along the B4036 near to the site of the Roman town of Bannaventa and immediately adjacent to the deserted Medieval Village of Thrupp. Rescue excavation like this is the type of archaeological opportunity that CLASP may wish to grasp in future should resources be available as such work fits well with the charities aims and ethos and could be instrumental in recording archaeology that would

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otherwise be lost. It was felt that the ‘cable trench’ may reveal some archaeological features and as there was no official watching brief, Fred Kay (CLASP Geophysical Survey Director) observed the work as it developed. Initially apart from a small Victorian pottery dump of mid 19th-century date and some squared stone blocks very little archaeology of any date was a visible.

Subsequently, whilst undertaking a geophysical survey as part of the wider Roman posting station survey at Bannaventa on the nearby Thrupp Ground an opportunity presented itself to investigate part of the cable trench for more substantial surviving archaeological remains. Several features were identified and the contractors Morgan Sidall and Western Power gave permission to carry out an exploratory excavation. Not only did they allow us access but their site supervisor Paul Bergin was particularly helpful and keen to collaborate providing us with space and time to undertake the excavation and generally assisting where ever possible.

Unfortunately because of the speed of the cable laying operation and the need to work with the contractor’s timetable the features although thoroughly excavated could only be photographed before the trench was back filled as work progressed. The cable trench cut through a known area of archaeological features which had been revealed through large-scale geophysical survey to the South and to the North of the B4036. These surveys revealed an extensive



complex of ditches and enclosures of indeterminate date but most probably belonging to the Roman and mediaeval periods.

The cable trench was 1.2m deep and 0.5m wide and the focus of the archaeological activity was located within a central section of 35m to the west of Thrupp Farm. Interestingly the trench alignment revealed an

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earlier cut in the southern baulk that indicated the existence of a previous cable trench laid in the same general area. This had been excavated through the adjacent archaeological features but had not been noted or recorded.

At the eastern end lay a length of substantial stonewall (3 m x 1 m) which showed two phases of construction and remained in places to 4 courses high. The date of the feature is difficult to interpret with any great certainty as no diagnostically datable material was recovered associated with the wall during the excavation. Less than 5 m to the West a further fragment of walling (2.5m x 1 m) at a right angle to the first was located. Constructed of large squared masonry it resembled the foundation phase associated with the wall previously mentioned. This piece of walling appeared to form an apsidal end to a larger rectangular building of which the other wall may have been the eastern side.



Not apparently associated with this building but immediately due east of it was the remains of a hearth or stoke hole which was located in the face of the northern baulk of the trench under the roadway itself. Unfortunately detailed excavation was impossible because of the high chance of road subsidence into the cable trench. This was the only feature to contain diagnostically datable pottery fragments however the date range is yet to be verified. Further east was the foundation of another stone wall aligned like the first, towards the north-west, but in

this case associated with a metallised flooring surface that stretched 5m towards the west. Remarkably virtually no finds were recovered from either around the features or in the fill from the cable trench which may have been a

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by-product of the levelling of the area when the original alignment of the B4036 was constructed presumably at some time during the 19th century. The only other dating evidence came from Metal detecting by Robin Noades (NNPast) of the trench and the field boundary to the south which produced a coin of Constantine dated to the 330s.

There are two possible ways to interpret these archaeological features but their true meaning will only be revealed through wider scale excavation. The first scenario could be the remains are those of the houses destroyed by Daventry Priory in 1489 during the enclosure of the village with the apsidal wall being part of a chapel described as *in desolacionem* by 1518. A more thought provoking but less likely scenario is that the archaeological features belong to a bath house complex possibly related to a larger '*mansio*' situated some distance from the posting station of *Bannaventa* as is in the case at *Tripontium*. The implications of this to the study of Roman Posting Stations

along Watling Street are too massive to contemplate....so we should not get carried away with such a prospect at this stage.



Elsewhere CLASP has been commissioned to carry out a geophysical survey on the last remaining undeveloped element of the mediaeval village at Upper Boddington which is currently being landscaped as a park and public amenity. The fieldwork indicated and confirmed the existence of a series of '*tofts*' or '*closes*' probably of Saxo-Norman date (850-1150) aligned along two sunken trackways. This suggests a deliberate

re-organization or enlarging of the village possible related to post Domesday development as mirrored elsewhere in the county. A further major holloway dominating the central area of the site which doesn't appear to relate to the *tofts & closes* is more likely to date to the high mediaeval period (1250-1350) as the field returned to more general agricultural use.

As for the future planning is now underway for a series of three small scale excavations to be undertaken in the second half of August and early September later this year. These will include exploratory work to the south of the cable trench discussed above to characterise and date the features identified here. Hopefully we will also have the opportunity to explore a Roman villa and potentially an early temporary marching camp. Each excavation will be of limited extent and last between 4 to 7 days. I hope to see you all as these events unfold.

Steve Young

From Blisworth Heritage Society

Blisworth Heritage Society has enjoyed some interesting and stimulating meetings. We have had "village" topics such as the photographic life of Walter Alexander [he recorded the village and its events throughout his lifetime] and a review of the parish records. "Canal" subjects have included a discussion about local waterways families and their lives. Wider Northamptonshire history has included the story of the Eleanor Crosses and the heroism of William Rhodes Moorhouse VC. The jubilee scrapbook has now sold out, although new pages are still being produced. This may lead to another edition in the future.

From Sue Blackwell, History of Tiffield Society

HOTS continues to meet on the second Tuesday of the month at 'The George' and we are pleased to report that our numbers are increasing.

Recent activities have included talks on diverse subjects including 'World War One Battlefields', 'Magic Lanterns', 'Growing up in the 40's and 50'', 'Coaching Inns' and 'Gallipoli'. Last year we visited Grafton Regis and Buckingham Gaol and are planning more visits this year including a private tour of

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Towcester Museum. Other forthcoming events include a talk by the Cotswold Archaeology Association about their ‘dig’ at the Towcester Moat site last year and a talk by Cathy Smith on ‘Northampton Lunatic asylum.

Our long term aim is still very much to collect as much information about Tiffield’s history; some of our residents have already provided some valuable details information but we still are still hoping to collect even more.

From Jennifer Smith, Harpole Heritage Group

HARPOLE HERITAGE GROUP have had several excellent speakers recently, we have heard about the Northamptonshire Regiment in WW1, Landmarks in the county, L.M.S.Patriot- The Unknown Warrior, and the Hallerton Treasure.

Some of our members catered for a wartime 'dinner' and several members recalled stories of the men we lost and what it was like to live in those dark days of WW1.

From Norman Garnett, The Whitehall Group

With the onset of colder weather most activities now includes the review, modification, standardizing, recording & digital archiving of drawings, data and objects accumulated in the period from the initial work on the Whitehall site in 2000 to it’s back-filling in 2012. These recorded details will then be forwarded for publication.

This work currently being undertaken, includes the ‘digitalisation’ of over 300 site plans of Whitehall.

The processes involve the scanning of the plans transferring these to computers using the Serif software programme. (I suggest that this makes a few of us ‘Serif-ims’; although there is a notable absence of cherubims)

The features on the plan (ie. every stone, rock, pebble, tile etc.) are then manually ‘re-traced’ before saving these. These saved drawings are then to be re-orientated in order that they can now be aligned with the overall site layout.

The glassware finds from the Whitehall site are also in the process of being classified (or is that glassified?) by Sandra Deacon and Steve Young.

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Approximately 900 pieces of coloured glass and approximately 1,000 of 'white' glass have now been lovingly counted and recorded. Photographic records from the site (1999 - 2012) are also being formulated & archived by Don Martin giving irrefutable proof of how we have all aged over the years (hair today; gone tomorrow). The long, winter evenings are simply flying by. In addition to this work there was an organised outing from Whitehall in December comprising of a walk round Potterspurty kindly arranged by Rod Conlon from Towcester. This was based on a detailed survey he had done of the village and its medieval origins. This proved to be very informative and of great interest to those taking part.

List of Contacts for CLASP Associations

Organisation	Contact	Tel
Norton, Northampton PAST	Francis Rodriguez	01327 872030
Weedon Bec History Society	Julia Johns	01327 341729
Flore Heritage Society	John Smith	01327 340387
Brington History Society	Ian Dexter	01604 771353
Harpole Heritage Group	Jennifer Smith	01604 831294
Whitehall Farm Roman Villa Landscape Project	Norman Garnett	01604 755479
Towcester & District Local History Society	Gina Boreham	01327 352687
Bugbrooke History Society	Alan Kent	01604 830518
Friends of Daventry Museums	David Adams	01327 605372
Blisworth Heritage Society	Jim Aveling	01604 859109
History of Tiffield Society	Steve Jowers	01327 350292
Northampton Artefact Recovery Club	Alan Standish	Not available
Barby Hill Archaeological Project	Gren Hatton	01788 822411

Deadline for the August 2015 Newsletter will be Sunday, August 16. All photos please at approx 300 dpi and separate from the text with indications of their positions.

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 4	7.45 pm	'Grandad's War'	Chapel Schoolroom, School Lane	Flore Heritage Society
March 10	8.00 pm	'The Moat Site, Towcester (post excavation Assessment)'	Top Room, The George Inn	History of Tiffield Society
March 12	7.30 pm	'Subterranean Secrets'	Methodist Chapel, School Lane	Harpole Heritage Group
March 30	7.30 pm	'The Northamptonshire Regiment'	Chapel Schoolroom, New Street	Weedon Bec History Society
April 1	7.45 pm	'Musical Aspects of the Great War'	Chapel Schoolroom, School Lane	Flore Heritage Society
April 9	7.30 pm	'Friends Ambulances in Ethiopia during WWII'	Methodist Chapel, School Lane	Harpole Heritage Group
April 14	TBA	Visit to Towcester Museum	Towcester Museum	History of Tiffield Society
April 24	7.30 pm	'Electricity'	The Abbey, Abbey Street	Friends of Daventry Museums
April 27	7.30 pm	'Conserving the Waterways Heritage'	Chapel Schoolroom, New Street	Weedon Bec History Society
May 6	7.45 pm	'Olney Museum'	Chapel Schoolroom, School Lane	Flore Heritage Society
May 12	8.00 pm	'Northamptonshire Lunatic Asylum'	Top Room, The George Inn	History of Tiffield Society
May 14	7.30 pm	AGM + National Trust Boardstall Duck Decoy	Methodist Chapel, School Lane	Harpole Heritage Group
May 22	2.30 pm	'Rare Sheep Breeds'	The Abbey, Abbey Street	Friends of Daventry Museums
June 3	TBA	Visit to Olney Museum	Olney Museum	Flore Heritage Society
June 9	8.00 pm	'The Ripper' (TBC)	Top Room, The George Inn	History of Tiffield Society
June 19	7.30 pm	'Follies'	The Abbey, Abbey Street	Friends of Daventry Museums
July 17	2.30 pm	'Lampport'	The Abbey, Abbey Street	Friends of Daventry Museums