



# CLASP

## Community Landscape & Archæology Survey Project NEWSLETTER



Local Heritage initiative



ROMAN RESEARCH TRUST

Website: [www.claspweb.org.uk](http://www.claspweb.org.uk)

Spring 2019, issue 28

Charity No 1111667

### **From Dave Hayward, Chairman of Trustees**

From my perspective I am hoping that the past few weeks have been the most important for CLASP for many years. Difficult to know what to lead on but I consider that there are two important, apparently unrelated actions which in reality are closely linked.

Firstly, I must turn to a discussion paper that Rob Close brought to the Trustees in the autumn outlining what he saw as vital strategic choices that CLASP needed to face and make if it was to progress into the future or fold into a structured demise (my words to reflect Rob's thoughts!). The Trustees have begun a formatted debate to work through his paper, not yet completed but enough to provide some fundamental thoughts and actions. Thanks Rob, hopefully we are on course for a future beyond today although there is still a lot of work to do.

Secondly, partly as a result of Rob's paper but also from what I have read and heard from academics discussing the latest thinking elsewhere in both archaeological and historical evolution, I considered that we needed to identify our future archaeological direction. Without this being resolved our whole purpose is not defined and therefore valueless.

These academic thoughts were particularly focused on the eras that fell within CLASP's area of archaeological interest; from the early Bronze Age through

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to probably the Viking and Norman invasions. The main line of thought was that there is far more continuity of population and presence than has been previously considered, something that I have discussed in length with our Archaeological Director. The second fundamental thought put forward by some is that the concept of perceived ages is imprecise and possibly misleading; perhaps we should be identifying specific events and phases in history eg the beginning of farming, increase in Belgic influence, decline of earliest Christianity etc.

My personal view is that the second thought strengthens the first by perhaps focusing on specific evolutionary factors in a stable presence or society.

Since CLASP began in 2002/ 3 our work has been targeted by the Local People – Local Past project that sought to define the underlying local Romano-British landscape. This written objective should perhaps have been enhanced as 'the underlying Romano-British landscape, both physical and social' Whilst this has served us well with some outstanding results, we have outgrown it by default with our necessary forays into the pre and post Romano-British eras.

I therefore took the view that once we defined the future archaeological strategy we could then identify what resources, of all types, we would require to achieve this strategy. To launch this process I drafted and took to the last Trustees meeting a new Archaeological Strategy which I insisted had to be agreed before anything else. Please read it carefully:

**"CLASP's future research, both archaeological and historical, whilst focused on defining holistically, both archaeologically and historically, the landscape of west Northamptonshire between AD43 and 410, will, as appropriate seek to identify the continuity of peoples and all aspects of their presence between BC (BCE) 2000 and AD (CE) 1066."**

Basically it means that we will seek to prove (or disprove) the extent of continuity of presence over the three thousand years between BCE2000 – CE1066.

This agreement was then followed by agreeing a new financial strategy that will see the creation of a 100 Club, an Amazon loyalty scheme, hopefully a Friends programme and whatever sponsorship and donations we can get.

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Please look out for announcements on all of these.

Lastly but perhaps not least, subject to final formal agreement, we have a 'home' at last. A property has become available to us at New Creation Farm, Nether Heyford. It is hopefully large enough to hold our archive and host working and office areas. I am also pleased to say that the Daventry Library, which is moving home, has kindly donated furniture, shelving and display cases to fully fit out the new home.

Again please watch this space for news – **and requests for physical assistance!** Can anybody please help with a large van/small lorry (even sponsor us with van hire for a day) to move the items from Daventry Library to Nether Heyford, probably early April. All offers of help, for now, to me at [chair\\_trustees@claspweb.org.uk](mailto:chair_trustees@claspweb.org.uk)

Dave Hayward

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### **From Rob Close, Chairman of the Organising Committee**

The Committee has met twice since the September Newsletter was issued. A diverse range of topics have been discussed.

2019 Projects: Three main projects have been agreed in principle pending final confirmation from the farmers and/or landlords. Dates are not yet confirmed for all three and depend on the crop cycle. The site of the first dig, a Romano-British site at Crick, is thought to be suitable to cope with encouraging potential new members to attend. With this in mind we have announced it on the Website and Facebook as probably being in July and running over a weekend. Training will be arranged. Once we have more information, we will publicize it. Ahead of the dig we will carry out a Geophysics survey.

The two other probable excavations are test pits at the Roman site at Manshead and a revisiting of the Anglo-Saxon cemetery. It may be necessary to have more restricted attendance at these.

Charging for Excavations: It has been agreed that digs must be self-financing. CLASP can incur two main costs at an excavation. At the request of members, we are now providing toilet facilities and to save considerable labour we

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may incur the cost of a JCB to expose the top surface. We will investigate the possibility of excavations being sponsored but as a default it has been decided to levy a charge of £10 a week or part week. This is a very small charge relative to what we understand is charged elsewhere.

General Data Protection Regulation Policy: The Committee is satisfied that the policy has been implemented successfully, with all permissions received. As a reminder, Salma Pervez, Trustee, is our Data Protection Officer.

CLASP 2018 Public Meeting: This was again held at Harpole Bowls Club, with Brian Giggins speaking about pre -1750 buildings in Towcester. Steve Young provided his interpretation of findings from the three digs in 2018. The evening was regarded as a success, but it is always difficult to fit the AGM, two presentations, raffle and break into the time allocated. For convenience we have decided to use Harpole again in 2019, with the AGM and Public meeting fixed for Wednesday 9th October. We are considering a new format with the speakers being Steve Young and other CLASP members. Separately, and a good time apart, we may hold a meeting at which external speakers present.

Northants Standards for Archaeology: New, very comprehensive standards have been introduced by the County. CLASP has substantive work to do to assess these and understand the consequence for its own record keeping.

CLASP Digital Archive: We continue to add to this in order to protect the security of our considerable data. Fred Kay has been very active in diligently writing-up Geophysics projects, submitting the Report to external parties and ensuring all raw and processed data is in the Archive.

Rob Close

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## **From Stephen Young, Archaeological Director**

The coming year may well herald the most momentous and significant event in our historical development since the founding of CLASP and the acquisition of charity status. I'm writing specifically of the possible transfer of our archive and archaeological activities to a new venue dedicated to our requirements at New Creation Farm, Nether Heyford. Hopefully the move will ensure our medium and long-term survival and assist us in enhancing our

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volunteer membership. Success with this initiative will enable us also to improve our ability to offer training, archaeological talks and events and make the archive more accessible. The importance of obtaining a home should not be underestimated and its impact on CLASP capability to maintain a sustainable approach to heritage issues is incalculable. Many obstacles remain to be surmounted but I'm confident that the CLASP aspiration of having a base and home will be achieved. I would urge everybody associated with our charity to become involved with the project as it develops over the next few months as we cannot achieve everything without your help.

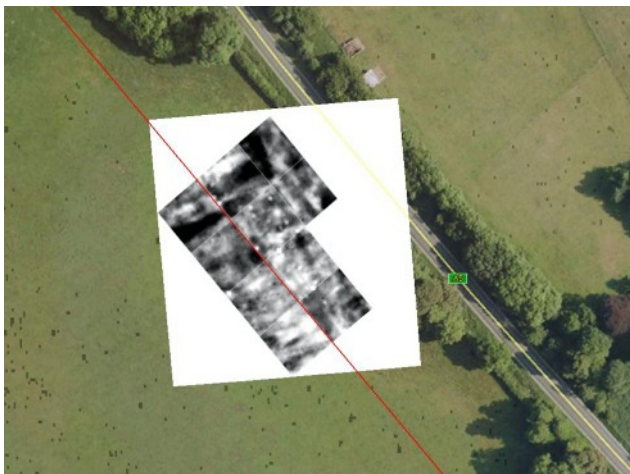
The coming year will also enable us to undertake a variety of fieldwork on different archaeological sites ranging from a Roman farmstead to Post Roman/Anglo Saxon cemeteries and even a possible early Christian site. The fieldwork will take place in early July, early August and late August/early September. These trial trenching and open excavations will afford interesting opportunities for our volunteers, allowing them to develop their skills. The excavation in July will involve weekend working and be particularly helpful for training new volunteers who may be undertaking their first fieldwork. Since the last newsletter, CLASP has concentrated on Post excavation work, publication of reports and undertaking further geophysical survey on the Iron Age Hill fort and Roman site on Borough Hill Daventry and the Roman Posting Station of Bannaventa.

Since the summer two reports have been published on the Posting Station of Bannaventa. One is concerned with the anomalies characterising the landscape observed to the east of Watling Street between the Wilton Locks and the Long Buckby crossroads which included the south eastern scheduled quadrant of the 'small town'.

The second report interprets the features recorded in the hinterland to the north east of the site. Both reports are available on the CLASP website and I would encourage you to read them because they help us to understand the nature of the site. Recently we have also undertaken a resistivity survey on the north western sector of the scheduled site just inside the north gateway and defensive wall. Our rationale was to see if we could enhance the results obtained during the magnetometer survey and identify any building layout

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plans. The approach has been successful and we now have the first credible evidence of the existence of building foundations of a substantial structure within the confines of Bannaventa.



mansio resistivity

Positioned at the apex of the promontory, the site overlooks the surrounding area with commanding views of Watling Street both to the north and south. Extensive stone scatters have been observed in the past and a fragment of a stone column from a colonnade recovered from here, implied a substantial building in this area but nothing more. Our pre-

vious magnetometer survey also intimated a clearer less intensively active zone of anomalies than recorded anywhere else across the settlement. This is consistent with and resonant of the type of anomaly profile associated with a site of a planned ‘civic’ related structure. The scale of the building and its dominating position within Bannaventa imply that we have located the ‘mansio’ (Official guest house) which is indicative of other Posting Stations along Watling Street. The nearest known ‘mansio’ to Bannaventa was excavated at Tripontium, the next Posting Station along Watling Street to the north. It has always been thought that Tripontium was probably the more important of the two sites but our findings suggest differently. The position of a ‘mansio’ at Bannaventa also proves that the whole system of Posting Stations built along Watling Street was an organised centralised approach undertaken by the imperial government. Its position within the reduced perimeter of the ‘small town’ is indicative of its continued importance for the community and the wider strategic needs of the province during the Roman period.

Unfortunately, I was unable to comment on the final excavation of the summer at Thrupp in the last newsletter because of the publication deadline.

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However, the range of features excavated were as interesting as those to the south of the road.

The excavation enabled us to investigate the features on the north side of the B4036 opposite the medieval tenements and trackway found on the south side of the road. We found that the trackway continued northward, and fragmented foundations of another tenement bordering the medieval trackway was excavated. The alignment of two ditches were also profiled with one showing evidence of being re-cut during its period of use. These ditches accorded well with the anomalies observed during the geophysical survey.



**Thrupp: Medieval tenement foundations and trackway north of B4036**

The archaeological stratigraphy, although producing evidence of extensive robbing and erosion through agricultural practice, was substantial and proved as informative as those features excavated to the south of the B4036. This trial trench allowed us to understand the layout and development of the central area of the deserted medieval village.

Finally, all the bone samples from the Post Roman and Anglo-Saxon cemeteries have gone off to be examined by Samantha Leggett at Cambridge University as part of her doctoral thesis. We are awaiting the scientific results of the isotope investigation on the Whitehall Farm burials and I hope that by the next newsletter we should be able to report on the findings and what this means for the interpretation of the site. Fred Kay and I

will also be taking part in a CBA conference at the village hall in Bugbrooke in April, about CLASP activities, in conjunction with talks about other work carried out by MOLA and others in the Daventry area. (See the web page for further details).

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## Nine Days To Nowhere, from Gina Brown and Geoff Bovington

An article by our members, Gina Brown and Geoff Bovington, based on their Northamptonshire perambulations last summer says Dave Hayward:

During nine days between the two digs at Thrupp Grounds in September we decided to investigate some of the places mentioned in the book by local author Byron Rogers entitled “The Green Lane to Nowhere”. This is a miscellany of stories about villages and happenings in the triangle of Northamptonshire situated roughly between Daventry, Towcester and Banbury.



Even today it is very much a backwater, lovely villages unspoilt by large developments abound.

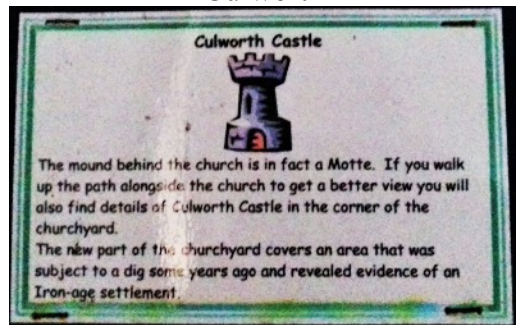
We found our first quarry, the grave of Charles Bacchus, a child slave in Culworth by the church door. Behind the church a huge copper beech grows with-



in a motte.



Culworth



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Just down the road we were transfixed by a clock with a single hand. To tell the time exactly you had to know within six hours what the time was. The clock was made by the local blacksmith just to show that he could do it! He appeared through the hedge to talk to us about it and is very proud.



Sustained by an excellent coffee we walked down the village to the old manor house where Charles II stayed before the battle of Cropredy Bridge.

On the little village green opposite the modern war memorial is the stone on which he stood to review his troops before the battle. It is known in the village as 'The Kings Pebble'.



In Newnham we discovered a public Nuttery (no jokes please) and harvested a nice crop of hazelnuts. It is hidden away at the end of the village and even some locals are unaware of its existence. This was proved a couple of days later when we were having lunch in the Plough

Inn, Everdon and got into conversation with two women at the next table. Gina was thanked profusely by one of them for coming all the way from New Zealand to tell her of the existence of something in the village where she had lived for 20 years!

Snorscomb attracted us by the signpost off the road to Everdon. The village had been razed to the ground in the late Middle Ages to make way for sheep. All that is left apart from the farm are the remains of building platforms. The local aristocracy in the form of the Knightley family carried out this practice all over Northamptonshire and the footpath through this area is called the Knightley Way. During the last of the enclosures in the 18C, one of the family who was due to hand over some land to the villagers asked to be allowed to have one last crop from the field. He planted oak, ash and elm!

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Fawsley Hall is nearby, which was the family seat of the Knightley family. Just across the fields is the family church which has impressively large family tombs. The church ha-ha keeps out the sheep which happily graze on the building platforms of yet another village that was cleared to make way for livestock.



Fawsley Church

In Farthingstone church there is a plaque saying that a descendent of the Knightley family had given a bequest to found a Sunday school in the village. Possibly he had a conscience about his predecessors' actions locally? Whilst we were in the church, we chatted to the lady verger who told us that Byron Rog-

ers still lives in Blakesley and visits the pub in Farthingstone every week. We made a point of visiting the pub on the appropriate day and met him and his wife. They seemed slightly bemused to be accosted by two "groupies" while they were having a quiet drink.

In the village is an almost secret garden called the 'Joy Mead Garden', a lovely walled garden created by the Agnew family in 1922 to commemorate their two children who had died through illness and injuries from the Great War. The Gardens have been left in trust to be enjoyed by the villagers and are managed by trustees for that purpose. The Agnews were a wealthy family and benefactors of the village but once the garden was complete, they moved away and had the family home demolished as they felt it was cursed in some way.



Above is the Joy Mead Garden

<http://www.farthingstone.org.uk/index.html>

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A Sunday surprise was the Portuguese restaurant at the Romer pub in Newnham, so we enjoyed eating tapas for lunch in the middle of rural Northamptonshire which was unexpected. All around the area there are ghosts of ridge and furrow in the fields with the best example on the road to Everdon.

We visited Church Charwelton, which is across the fields at the back of the village of Charwelton. Again, a church surrounded by evidence of a DMV and next to an old manor house. The so called 'Jurassic Way' goes past the church. The Andrew and again Knightley families were responsible for the clearances.

This just gives the reader a taste of what lies in this area of Northamptonshire, we recommend the book to all as an entertaining read.



Charwelton Church

At the end of our travels we realised that we had not looked for the first person of interest in the book. Namely the man known as 'The Bearer of The Bow' to Henry IV, Matthew Swettenham. A man whom served both Richard II, Henry IV and Henry V in many capacities. The title 'Bearer of the Bow' is not to be confused with the title of 'Bowbearer' given to an under-officer of the forest who dealt with all manner of trespass to do with vert or venison.

A monumental brass commemorating Matthew Swettenham is to be found in the parish church of Blakesley, Northamptonshire.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/52219527@N00/5333608910>

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## **CLASP Facebook – re-launched and revitalised, from Gina Brown & Geoff Bovingdon**

CLASP's re-launched Facebook group has a vibrancy and purpose fitting the various opportunities that we are looking for in the future.

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Regular contributors have been posting some very interesting articles gleaned from their own sources that offer something worth reading. It is essential that current and new members have a reason to check the group page frequently or there is little point in having it. At present we do not have enough CLASP input to sustain the group without a great deal of additional archaeology news. Jeremy and I ask that all the CLASP members who are on Facebook PLEASE help the cause by joining the Facebook group and CONTRIBUTING to it by writing about what CLASP has done for them, what CLASP means to them, and their hopes for the future. And would they please invite their own archaeologically interested friends to join the Facebook group just open: [CLASP Facebook](#) or the Facebook icon on our website:

<http://www.claspweb.org.uk/>

Ultimately we hope the page will increase to a sensible 500+ members which I base on other archaeology FB groups. Our desired aim is to attract new excavators to add to an already experienced (but ageing) team. FB is today the current 'go to' for many would be diggers to find and join their summer dig and we cannot afford to turn our backs and miss opportunities to promote CLASP.

Gina Brown

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**Deadline for the Autumn 2019 Newsletter will be Sunday, September 18th 2019. All photos please at approx 300 dpi and separate from the text with indications of their positions.**

### **Geophysics Up-date, from Fred Kay**

The geophysics group is still carrying out regular surveys, usually once a week. The area surrounding the Roman Posting Station on Watling St (the A5) is now complete and written up (reports available via the CLASP website or ADS - the Archaeological Data Service). Work is ongoing on the scheduled monument itself. We are extending the survey to include resistivity, a slow tedious exercise but it is revealing more information, including lots of Roman ceramics picked up on the side. Those who participated in the field walk there may remember it is plentiful and it has been ploughed twice since then.

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The work on Borough Hill, in association with MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology), is almost complete having been on hold for a long period during the dry summer when the instrument probes couldn't penetrate the ground. Moles, which plague the Golf Course, have been useful in turning up numerous bits of Roman pot and the odd tesserae. Golfers are puzzled why archaeologists can't walk passed a mole hill without kicking it.

I (Fred Kay) gave an informal lunch-time talk in a local hostelry on the physics of magnetometry to a small group of enthusiasts; not too technical. It does help to follow the results if you understand what is happening.

Future planned work includes a survey of, a so far unrecorded, Roman site at Crick prior to a possible excavation later in the year, and a very small survey in the centre of Towcester.

We are still looking for volunteers. If you are interested, have a bit of spare time and need some (gentle) exercise please email [fkay@mingus.plus.com](mailto:fkay@mingus.plus.com)

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### **From Jennifer Smith, Harpole Heritage Group**

We continue to have excellent speakers to our meetings. Peter Perkins told us about the 'Evaluation of the Boot and Shoe Industry' of which Northamptonshire is famous. Roy Smart is very entertaining and gave a presentation about 'Amy Johnson and her Aeroplane'. Richard Deacon showed us more photographs of 'Northampton in the 1970s' - how Northampton has changed and is still changing.

Members enjoyed our Annual Dinner, especially the puddings and Mike Ingram told us the history of "The Battle of Edgecote" . To mark the 100 years of the end of WW1 we are arranging to have the lettering on the War Memorial repainted. This year Harpole Heritage Group will be celebrating 20 years and we are having a dinner with outside caterers - this will give our hard working catering ladies a well earned rest.

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## From Jim Aveling, Blisworth Heritage Society

### Thrupp: some outline of the history of a lost Northamptonshire village.

Thrupp appeared on the scene in the late ninth or early tenth century. This notion was suggested by the late G W Hatton who postulated that the frontier between Saxon England and the Danelaw [in Northamptonshire, the Watling Street was crossed by parties of Danish farmers who, with the approval of the local Saxons, were permitted to found small peaceable farming settlements on undeveloped, or little used land within the bounds of Saxon communities. So Thrupp was developed in the northern area of Norton. Similarly, Kilsby was founded in the territory of a larger Barby and Barby Nortoft. Snorscomb was carved out of Everdon. Abthorpe appeared in close proximity to Slapton and Grimscote was formed in Cold Higham's area of dominance. Interestingly, a recent book, "Thorps in a changing landscape", points out that thorps were often associated with areas which had seen much Roman activity. In Norton parish are the remains of Bannaventa, the Roman posting-station, an outlying Roman villa and three other settlement nuclei.

Thrupp appears in the written record for the very first time in the will of Aethelgifu, a wealthy Anglo-Saxon lady. This has been dated to between 956 and 1002. Then there is a gap until the Domesday Book appeared in 1086. Here the small village is found to be divided between no less than four separate landholders, some of them among the upper echelons of Norman society. The Count of Mortain, William the Conqueror's half-brother, who held over a hundred properties in Northamptonshire, the Countess Judith, King William's niece, had 78 other holdings in the county. The other properties were held by Hugh de Grandmesnil (he had 19 estates in Northamptonshire) and Gunfrid de Chocques, who held 17. The villeins and bordars mentioned in these entries amount to 5 villeins (all on the estate of the Count of Mortain) and 8 bordars. So we could estimate the population of the village at around 50 to 60 persons. A few of them may belong to Welton as the Countess Judith's holding was partly in each village. Leofsig and Swein are named as former landholders in these entries and provide some proof of Danish influence in early Thrupp.

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Thrupp has many appearances in public records such as Charter rolls, Fine Rolls and Patent rolls. These are concerned with changes in land ownership and the business of ensuring that dues are paid and received by the monarchy. However, they tell us nothing of the common man whose unrelenting brawn kept this agricultural society afloat. One of the few occasions we encounter these people is in the early entries for Thrupp in 'The Cartulary of Daventry Priory'. Warner de Thrupp, the feudal lord, in about 1230, granted to the Priory of Daventry in lieu of alms, the villein John, son of Richard Execrote. Warner also granted Roger, the son of Edric de Throp (another villein) with all his household in perpetuity. In addition, Roger the villein, the son of William Chancespure with all his chattels and with all his progeny that shall issue from him. Finally, Warner granted William, the son of Cedrich, to the monks as a free man in return for eight shillings. William was to render four capons at Christmas. Warner had fallen into financial problems in his dealings with the Priory. That is why he was trading people with the monks. He was renting the watermill at Welton and falling into arrears with his rent. He had made an agreement with Prior Walter to pay twenty shillings of the twenty five shillings which he owed for the farm of the mill to the Priory. But he could not keep up with his repayments and was forced to return his charter of enfeoffment to the Priory a few years later.

Daventry Priory, which has entered Thrupp's story, was founded in Preston Capes in about 1090. It was relocated to Daventry c 1108 and as well as providing religious services (its primary purpose), it was also a business with estates to run and acquire. The monks and lay persons working for the Priory had to be fed and maintained and the churches in their care also. So the Priory bought, sold and acquired land, particularly in the vicinity of Daventry.

Thrupp, just outside Daventry, and relatively small, received considerable attention from the Priory. In the later thirteenth century the Priory revealed its hand when the Cartulary records several mentions of a grange being built in the fields of Thrupp. There are agreements between the leading figures in Thrupp society such as Margery, the widow of Simon de Throp, Adam de Capes, John de Braunfeld, and Thomas le Eschirmisur about rights of free entry and about the repair of walls. All these agreements took place in the 1280s. There was some friction as the wall was erected around the grange and Thomas le Eschirmisur was found to have dismantled part of the wall. He was

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compelled to apologise and agree to the Priory's provisions. It has been surmised that the length of time it took to build the grange was caused by the necessity of transporting useful stone from the ruins of Bannaventa and that the grange may have consisted of a number of buildings such as a house for a bailiff and storehouses for produce. In any case the Priory was not a large one and perhaps its funds had to be carefully expended and this would account for the length of time it took to complete its construction. After all this activity the grange is not mentioned again in the Cartulary. We must imagine that its operations of collecting, storing and disbursing the proceeds of the Priory's agricultural produce went on year after year.

The Priory had other granges on its various estates but Thrupp's site is the only one which is written about with any details. The making of the grange and the planning which went into its creation, the purchases and exchanges with the other land-holders show how the Priory increased its hold on Thrupp.

Thrupp had no church of its own and the inhabitants had to attend the parish church in Norton. Simon de Trop was granted leave to have a chantry in "a certain place before his house" with a chaplain provided at his own cost. The chaplain was to celebrate solely for the family and guests, except that the aged and infirm of Thrupp would be allowed to attend, but only on Sundays and feast days. At the big church festivals the family had to attend Norton Church, whereas the rest of the inhabitants of Thrupp had to attend church in Norton throughout their lives. Prior Nicholas and Simon reached an agreement about the chapel of St John the Baptist regarding the advowson of the chapel (the right to present a priest). It was agreed that Simon and his heirs were to have the right to present priests to the chapel and the Priory was to give seven quarters of corn and two per year to the priest. This was disbursed at regular intervals throughout the year. Also the priest was to live in a house at the east end of the chapel.

The quid pro quo was that the Priory was to have two virgates in Drayton from Simon and a rent of twenty shillings for the priest who was to take an oath to his mother church. The chapel was the last building standing in Thrupp in 1518 when it was described as "ecclesia in desolacionem". What was the cause of the demise of Thrupp?

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Several factors united to create the depopulation and desertion of village sites. There was the great plague (the Black Death) of 1348/9 which devastated the population of England, reducing the population by 30 to 40%. This was followed by recurring outbreaks in 1361, 1369, 1375, 1379-83, 1390-1, 1399-1400. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century there were no fewer than eleven more outbreaks and seven more in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. A reduction in the workforce meant that labour became more expensive and that marginal land was abandoned in order to concentrate upon the better land. A smaller and weakened workforce, beset with failed harvests due to awful weather conditions, civil wars followed by the Hundred Years War and, later, the Wars of the Roses created a climate of change. Labour was becoming a scarcer commodity and landlords realised that by depopulating villages and by replacing people with sheep flocks that they were going to be vastly better off. The number of tenants paying rent to the Priory had declined towards the end of the 1480s and the rents collected had fallen. Some of the messuages had ceased to pay rent and may have been abandoned for much of the decade. The Prior, Thomas Ylston (or Ibston), decided to evict the villagers, to throw down their houses and barns and to send them on their way. On May 4, 1489 the fateful day occurred.

In 1517, twenty eight years afterwards, the inquiry into the depopulation of Thrupp was discussed in a survey inaugurated by Henry VIII. This is part of "The Domesday of Inclosures 1517-1518", edited by I S Leadam. G W Hatton has translated this from the Latin and it follows here:

"And the aforesaid jurors say that (blank in MS) the late prior of the monastery of Daventry took unto it by seisin into his demesne, as his feudal right, fourteen messuages, four cottages and four hundred acres of arable land (that were) suitable for and used for agriculture and were ploughed annually, and before that time were usually located and demised along with the messuages, namely with each one of the messuages twenty acres of arable at least, in the hamlet called Thorpe in the parish of Norton in the aforesaid county and [he] thus seised it on the fourth of May in the fourth year of the reign of the late King Henry VII (ie 1489), and caused the tenements there and the aforesaid hamlet to be levelled to the ground, and deliberately allowed it to be devastated and the aforesaid lands to be converted and changed from their customary culture and ploughing and sowing for grain there, into pastures for sheep and other animals, and since then the usage is such that the economy and culture

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of those tenements could not be maintained after the said fourth of May 1489 but was wholly and totally prevented and they decayed there; and by this means twelve ploughs were put out of use and put down, and the parochial church there was left in desolation nor was any remedy provided, for which reason one hundred persons who until that time had lived in the aforesaid messuages and had been sufficiently occupied in the culture and economy there prior to the fourth of May, left their aforesaid homes in tears on the said fourth of May and were swiftly led away, so that it may be supposed that they perished in extreme poverty and thus ended their lives. And they say that the tenements there were worth twenty four pounds a year after deductions. And it is [now] held by (blank in MS)".

The Thrupp tenants had paid their rents to the Priory in the Michaelmas of 1488 for the period to the Easter of 1489. Therefore the Prior's decision to evict them may have been announced at very short notice. Fourteen messuages and four cottages were levelled to the ground which gives us a population of between ninety and one hundred persons. The messuages comprised a dwelling house with outbuildings such as barns, cowsheds, pigsties and a croft, an area of land used for all manner of purposes, particularly as a kitchen garden, the cultivation of some fruit trees and the keeping of poultry. In the open fields the land attached to the messuage was scattered in strips throughout the two large fields of the hamlet. The holder of the messuage also had rights of common on Thrupp's common land. The cottagers had a cottage and much the same as the messuage holders but on a lesser scale and no land in the open fields, merely the right to graze a cow and a couple of sheep on the common land.

In the 1517 inquiry it was stated that each messuage had at least twenty acres of land associated with it. However the evidence from the Computus Book is that the cottagers had no land in the open fields and some of the messuages had 1 virgate of land and some only a half virgate. The 400 acres were most probably made up by virgates of between 22-24 acres and half virgates of between 11 and 12 acres. The reclamation of the house plots and the adjoining crofts would yield a further 30-40 acres. The remaining 70-100 of the 400 acres must have come from the enclosure of all or part of Thrupp's common land.

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Twelve ploughs were put out of action. If those farming the full virgates had their own ploughs and those with half virgate holdings shared a plough with another man in the same situation, then we can deduce that there were probably 10 messuages with a full virgate and four messuages with half a virgate. The tenements were said to have been worth £24 per annum after deductions. This total is refuted by the evidence from the Compotus Book. This shows the total income from both Thrupp and Norton as between £27 and £32 per annum over the period 1483-1488. The 1517 survey had to rely on the figures given by local people a generation after the event. Also there may have been an element of revenge on their part for the gross inflation of the rental returns.

The Compotus Book also indicates that only about seven messuages and two cottages in Thrupp were paying rent in the middle of the 1480s. This suggests that up to half of the messuages and cottages may have been standing empty and that a large area of land was unploughed. The statement in 1517 that "400 acres ... had all been ploughed annually" appears to be at odds with the actual record of the Priory's Compotus Book. The Priory's decision to enclose the land may have arisen because many of the Thrupp tenements were empty and no income was coming in and no doubt the successful operations of local enclosing landlords and their creation of sheep pastures was a spur to the Prior's decision. The tenements may well have been notionally worth a total of £24 per annum, but a low level of population in the fifteenth century probably meant that the Priory was only able to obtain 50-60% of this in rent.

A further hint comes from the Priory's Compotus Book in the entries for 1490 where tithes are being charged for each head of sheep. The rate varied between 11d and 12d per sheep. From other documents [the sheep censuses of 1547 and 1564] we learn that Richard Andrews of Daventry was pasturing 1000 sheep at Thrupp and Daventry pastures in 1547 and 800 sheep in 1564. This accords with the rule of "two sheep plus their lambs per acre" as Thrupp pastures totalled 400 acres. Applying the per capita sheep tithe of 11-12d of the Compotus Book the Priory was able to obtain an annual tithe rent of between £36-13s-4d (assuming 800 sheep at 11d each) and £50 (assuming 1000 sheep) at 12d each. This represents an improvement between 50% and 100% on the Priory's maximum theoretical profit from the land when it was all arable. It seems clear from the above calculations that the Prior had made the right choice from a commercial point of view and a wretched choice from

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an ethical standpoint. The Priory was not to enjoy its expanded income for very long after the Commission's report as in 1526 Cardinal Wolsey's plan to build a new college at Oxford came into fruition, The Priory ceased to exist when Wolsey obtained papal sanction for its closure and the diversion of its endowments. However, Wolsey failed to please his master, Henry VIII, being unable to obtain an annulment of Henry's marriage to Queen Katherine. The scheme for the new college was adopted by the King and the Priory of Daventry with all its possessions eventually became part of Christ Church's endowments.

This account is based upon the work of the late Grenville Hatton. He collected and transcribed many records and account books and translated from the British Library copy of the 'Cartulary of Daventry Priory', since this copy differs in many respects from the copy used in the Northamptonshire Record Society's version. He also expanded his translation to include a fuller account of the charters which particularly applied to Thrupp.

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## List of Contacts for CLASP Associations

| Organisation                                 | Contact        | Tel            |
|--|----------------|----------------|
| Phoenix Artefact Search Team                 | Bill Wiggins   | 01327 7 843469 |
| Weedon Bec History Society                   | Julia Johns    | 01327 341729   |
| Flore Heritage Society                       | Jay Phelps     | 01327 340282   |
| 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   |
| 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 Project                           | Rob Close      | 07740 039467   |

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