



CLASP

Community Landscape &
Archæology Survey Project

NEWSLETTER

Website: www.claspweb.org.uk

Charity No 1111667



February 2009, Issue 9

Quite a few CLASP members from last year and earlier have not to date renewed their subscriptions, due last September at the AGM. This will be the last Newsletter they will receive and they will cease to be members unless subscriptions are paid. If you wish to renew, please send a cheque for £5 (payee CLASP) and post to Julia Johns, 7 Eton Close, Weedon, Northants, NN7 4PJ ASAP!

From your Organising Committee Acting-Chairman

Welcome to the first Newsletter for 2009 – may this year bring you all you hope for. As I write, Barack Obama is being inaugurated and I wonder what light archæology will have to shed on this momentous event in 2000 years time? I feel, perhaps naively, that today's change of US Presidency may at least increase the chances of there being people around to be archæologists by then!

Our AGM back in October was, on a rather smaller scale, also a significant event. While the audience was a bit too small for a large room, it nevertheless had the critical mass and quality needed to support an interesting evening's debate. Certainly the speakers were impressed by the fact that we had organised the debate and were impressed by the evidence they found of our serious interest in community archæology and concern for local heritage. As you'll see from his report, Dave Hayward continues to lead CLASP's involvement in planning decisions around Daventry: many thanks to Dave for all his work on this.

Whitehall is planning an Open Day this year – the last chance to see the original bath house before it is re-buried. Planning is already well under way and there is no doubt that the team will be calling for help in all sorts of ways. Although Whitehall is a separate organisation to CLASP, it is in many ways the flagship of the CLASP fleet and, with the Open Day, the most public of our archæological investigations. Please be ready to help when asked.

Jeremy Cooper

Message from the Secretary of the Organising Committee

The vast majority of my work during the last six months has been centred around the ongoing major planning applications at Daventry - Monksmoor, Churchfields and Danetre Village. All three developers have now appealed against the time being taken by WDC to make a decision on the applications. This therefore means that the decisions will be taken by an Inspector consequent to him hearing a full *Appeal Hearing*. Thankfully the Inspector has decided to hear the three appeals as one. The *Hearing* starts later this month at the Saints Rugby Club in Northampton. I personally attended the two pre-*Inquiry Hearings* and ensured that CLASPS interests were noted (I have never seen so many QCs in one room - no wonder these things cost so much money!).

As a result of constructive negotiations with the developer's archaeological consultants and the fact that this appeal only relates to an application for Outline Planning consent, CLASP is in the process of agreeing what are called *Statements of Common Ground* with each developer. This will therefore mean that CLASP will not have to give oral evidence to the *Inquiry*. Hopefully taking this course will enable us to achieve a lot more in the long term. We are ensuring the recognition that there needs to be significant community involvement with the major archaeological investigations that will be taking place across the area before development commences. We acknowledge that the majority of the major works will have to be undertaken by archaeological contractors but there is scope for our involvement in several areas.

Whatever happens with the planning applications, the work already undertaken by the developers in the area of archaeological investigation has been of immense value not only to CLASP but to archaeology generally in the area. At this stage the extent and nature of settlement during both the latter phases of the first millennia BC and subsequently into the Romano-British era are becoming clearer. Hopefully these will in due course be related to both the Borough Hill Hillfort and Bannaventa. The evidence appears to be that small farmsteads during the late Bronze and Iron Ages continued into the Romano-British era. It appears however, that there was a radical change later in the third century. Considerable numbers and types of boundaries have been located across all three sites and investigative work will have to be done to establish dating, phasing and purpose.

All of the CLASP submissions have been published on the CLASP website, www.claspweb.org.uk in the Spoilheap section; the finalised *Statements of Common Ground* will appear shortly.

The 2009 CLASP AGM and public open meeting will be held on the 15th September at 19.00 hrs in Weedon Village Hall. Hopefully there will be two speakers, Mike Rumbold on 'Weedon Depôt and its Transport Links' and another speaker, yet to be identified, on 'The Modern Use of Heritage'

Returning to the subject of planning issues, I am aware that the Northamptonshire Mineral Plan is currently under consideration and will again be heard as an *Appeal* by an

cont page 3

inspector. I am also aware that a potential site at Upper Heyford is included. If any other member society or individual member is aware of a potential site for gravel/sand extraction in the area and they have concern about the archæology of the area being under threat, please ask your society representative on the Organising Committee or for individual members, your representative Alan Dent, to bring these concerns to the next meeting of the Organising Committee.

Dave Hayward

A late bit of news from Dave Hayward

I am pleased to say that CLASP has now finalised *Statements of Common Ground* with the three developers for the proposed major expansion sites to the north and east of Daventry.

They each include an agreement that CLASP will be kept informed of all the archæological developments prior to building and given the opportunity to be involved with some of the archæological fieldwork work.

This is hopefully very positive for the future of CLASP and its status in the wider archæological community.

Arrangements will be made for these documents to be available on the CLASP website in the near future.

The view from the Archæological Director.

The expected extensive fieldwalking at Bannaventa had to be curtailed due to bad weather and the consequent late harvest. I expect us to revisit this survey next year before the area is cultivated and seeded in late August early September 2009. However individual members of Norton PAST have been able to undertake some sporadic detecting since last year's survey and their findings are being added to the growing coin assemblage record. The promised fieldwalking at Tiffield and the test pitting at Weedon are now being organised to take place before the onset of spring and details should be available on the CLASP hot line by mid to late February. Due to the increasing scale of the potential work available to us and the usefulness of the data obtained, more funding is being sought to enable the most detailed exploration to be carried out.

During the summer at Whitehall Farm, fieldwork focused on excavating a second bath house range that lies across the lower slope. The archæological preservation of these facilities is extremely good and of critical use in the overall interpretation of the late villa complex. The level of survival is in stark contrast to the extensively robbed and eroded state of the main villa range. These remains along with the fully excavated bath house range are particularly important components in developing a dependable chronology for the interpretation of the archæological story of the settlement at Whitehall Farm during its later Roman phases.

cont page 4



Fig 1 Bath house 2 : View across the hypocaust '08
Pic by Jeremy Cooper

An archaeological investigation of Room 1 and 2 of the second bath house range has continued whilst we tried to identify the layout and plan of the rest of the building. Elements of the stratigraphy beneath the Post Roman timber hall in the courtyard were also examined. The interface between the courtyard, the eastern elements of the main villa range and the southern wall of the already excavated bath house block required further detective work concerning their relationship. Time was also allocated to the excavation of a drainage channel that divides the upper and lower portions of the domestic core of the site to try and understand the different drainage strategies used on the hill side to aid occupation in the Roman period and cultivation of the area in medieval times.

The excavation revealed we have a far larger under floor hypocaust system in bath house 2 which is approximately double the size of that previously uncovered. Not much of the original Roman floor level has survived but considerable elements of the supporting 'pilae' can clearly be seen. The existence of a third room adjoining the hypocaust was confirmed although its full extent has not been determined at present. Underpinning the main exterior wall of the range on the western side is a monumental masonry platform or wall foundation which is at least a metre wide. It demonstrates a preoccupation with alleviating the problems of drainage and the instability of the slope caused by the emergence of the local spring at this point. In addition it clearly shows the pretentious aspirations for the earliest phases of the villa complex envisaged by the 'builders' or owners of the estate.

A pottery assemblage of 954 sherds was retrieved during the excavation. This ceramic material allows us to propose a clear chronological profile for the second bath house range and for the exterior paved area associated with the southern wall of the first bath house range. The building itself appears to date from the 3rd century AD; however the pottery from the layers sealing the structural remains is characteristically 4th century.

cont page 5

Meanwhile the paved area contained characteristic Central Gaulish black colour coated ware of the mid 3rd century AD as well as 4th century. The contexts associated with the paved 'patio' or 'veranda' produced a magnificent 'silver' ring with a gem stone of late 2nd to 3rd century date. A figure depicted on the gem appears to represent the God Mercury although this awaits confirmation.

On the Harpole 2 (Barn Close) Roman settlement site some trial trenching on the surviving earthworks covering the south-western wing of the villa range was undertaken in early September. Unfortunately poor weather conditions affected the progress of the excavation especially on the last day. Never-the-less we were able to achieve the archaeological aim of the fieldwork which was to investigate the potential survival of the mosaic pavements that had probably existed on this part of the site. The fieldwork indicated extensive robbing of the southwest building complex and confirmed the extensive destruction of the mosaic and tessellated floors. However the exploratory excavation revealed the survival of substantial structural elements of the south-western wing with traces of interior walls remaining to a height of at least five courses high in one of the rooms. Again as at Whitehall Farm this demonstrates that the level of archæology surviving remains a mixed picture and needs to be investigated on a site by site approach.

Amongst the building debris recovered from one room were a fragment of a column base from a colonnade and possibly part of an ornate stone finial from a gable wall. The existence of such stonework is indicative of a building of some quality based on classical architectural pretensions. It could well be that we are dealing with a basement or crypt of part of the south west wing. Hopefully this will form the focus for a small excavation next year which will help us understand the structural development of the villa. The coin list for this once opulent villa site is not as large as the list for Whitehall Farm but at 220 coins provides the second biggest coin assemblage from any of the rural settlement surveyed by CLASP (see fig 2 on page 6).

We have also arranged with Brington Historical Society to provide feedback to the Earl Spencer about the initial work carried out by CLASP on the Roman settlements situated on the Althorp Estate. Hopefully this might result in further work in the future into the state of preservation and character of the settlements surveyed.

Finally I would just like to say that talking to colleagues in commercial archæology, the Council for British Archæology and local government at county and district level, the pressures on the archæological resource of the country are set to grow whilst the ability to deal with developments will decrease. The financial constraints of recent times are beginning to strangle the discipline and your willingness to be involve in recording our shared past remains essential to alleviate the potential problems that will arise in the future. I hope we will be able to continue to undertake more fieldwork and that I shall see you in the projects that lie ahead.

Steve Young



Fig 2 Harpole 2: South West Wing Basement Room
Pic by Jeremy Cooper

A note from Sandra Deacon

The Whitehall Farm dig this summer will start on June 15 and run to July 10, with the Open Day on July 12. Help is needed for both the dig itself and the Open Day.

Harpole Heritage Group

During the first week in September and for three days, a team that included members of the Harpole Heritage Group, CLASP and one member from Northampton PAST met at Harpole one – Barn Close.

cont on page 7

The digger arrived on time to cut a 40 metre trench right on target following measurements from CLASP planners and details of the previous geophys report. Between showers of rain we found evidence of several wall bases and one significant outer wall. A five course stone wall was found at the end of the trench and on further investigation other walls that joined up into a square. What is this mystery? We all wanted to go back another time to find out.

About the site were found 14 Roman coins and several other metal pieces, 126 sherds of pottery, Samien ware, tessarae and building materials. A round piece of stone thought to be the base of a column and a large piece of 'worked' stone.

Unfortunately, the weather was terrible. Thanks to all who helped – we worked well together. See you next time.

Jennifer Smith

Secretary to Harpole Heritage Group

Jenifer has also given a talk on “Archæology in Harpole” to children in year four at the Primary school. They had been learning about the subject over several weeks and were all very keen, taking an interest in everything including photos as well as the artifacts that she had taken along. Jennifer also had an invite to go to their Class Assembly at which they performed a play about the time when Time Team came to the school. The play had been written by the children with help from Mrs Marshall and included Phil with his hat, Mick in his stripy jumper and Carezza. A mosaic floor and a resistivity machine made by one of the dads, finishing with a song that explained what they had learned. We may have some budding archæologists in the future!

List of Association Contacts

Organisation	Contact	Tel
Norton, Northampton PAST	Brian Ives	01604 719288
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	Colin Davenport	01327 702055

Table of Events for CLASP Groups

Dates	Time	Event	Location	Group
Meet every 2 months. See www.bugbrookelink.co.uk/history or contact Alan Kent, tel: 01604 830518				Bugbrooke History Society
Feb 11	7.30 pm	Black Boots and Short Trousers	Riverside Centre, Islington Road	Towcester & District Local History Society
Feb 12	7.30 pm	Old Cures and Remedies	Methodist Chapel, School Lane	Harpole Heritage Group
Feb 16	7.30 pm	The British Antarctic Survey	The Reading Room	Brington History Society
Feb 18	7.30 pm	Members' Photographs of Daventry	Daventry Town Council Offices, North Street	Daventry Local History Group
Mar 4	7.45 pm	Roman Remains at Piddington	Chapel Schoolroom, Chapel Lane, Flore	Flore Heritage Society
Mar 11	7.30 pm	Annual General Meeting	Riverside Centre, Islington Road	Towcester & District Local History Society
Mar 12	7.30 pm	Musical Boxes	Methodist Chapel, School Lane	Harpole Heritage Group
Mar 18	7.30 pm	Library Service & its Local & Family History Resources and Facilities	Probably in Daventry Library	Daventry Local History Group
Mar 30	7.30 pm	Vikings in Northamptonshire	Chapel Schoolroom, New Street, Weedon	Weedon Bec History Society
April 1	7.45 pm	Reconstructing the Past	Chapel Schoolroom, Chapel Lane, Flore	Flore Heritage Society
April 9	7.30 pm	Castle Dykes	Methodist Chapel, School Lane	Harpole Heritage Group
April 15	7.30 pm	Research Groups; members to start into either Poor Law or Non-conformity in the town	Daventry Town Council Offices, North Street	Daventry Local History Group
April 27	7.30 pm	Spires and Squires of Northamptonshire	Chapel Schoolroom, New Street, Weedon	Weedon Bec History Society

cont on page 9

Table of Events for CLASP Groups

Dates	Time	Event	Location	Group
May 6	7.45 pm	Northampton Architects	Chapel Schoolroom, Chapel Lane, Flore	Flore Heritage Society
May 14	7.30 pm	Annual General Meeting followed by A Roman's Wife	Methodist Chapel, School Lane	Harpole Heritage Group
May 20	7.30 pm	A Visit to Ashby St Ledgers Church	Ashby St Ledgers Church	Daventry Local History Group
June 3	7.30 pm on site	A visit to Piddington Roman remains & the Museum	Contact John Smith, tel: 01327 340387	Flore Heritage Society
June 17	7.30 pm	Annual General Meeting followed by John Dennett's Family History	Daventry Town Council Offices North Street	Daventry Local History Group
July 15	7.30 pm	Research Groups (as in April)	Daventry Town Council Offices North Street	Daventry Local History Group
Aug 19	7.30 pm	Exhibition Meeting for the October Exhibition	Daventry Town Council Offices North Street	Daventry Local History Group

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE

The Deadline for the next issue is Sunday night, August 23rd.

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