



CLASP

Community Landscape & Archæology Survey Project NEWSLETTER



Website: www.claspweb.org.uk

February 2016, issue 23

Charity No 1111667

From Rob Close, Chairman of the Organising Committee

It was pleasing to see the attendance at the 2015 general meeting that followed the AGM, with a number of non-members attending because of the publicity given to CLASP in the preceding months. Attendees heard three presentations. Steve Young provided his normal excellent round-up of CLASP's activities and areas of focus. Professor Gary Lock gave an overview of the project he is leading creating a National Atlas of Iron Age Hillforts. This was complemented by Gren Hatton talking about the CLASP project he has led mapping Northamptonshire's Hill Forts. There were also excellent displays by our member societies.

The Committee did not meet in the final quarter of 2015 as the scheduled meeting was overtaken by an excellent opportunity to work under the professional archaeologists at MOLA at the scheduled by-pass near Nether Heyford. (There is a separate note on this in the newsletter). A rescheduled meeting in December was also cancelled because of a call to arms to move many of boxes of artefacts from a secondary site at Whitehall into a new container next to the original one. When spring comes there will be a need to erect shelving and create an inventory of what is where.

The Committee did meet this January and has decided that its current areas of focus for 2016 will be to:

cont page 2

- Ensure the 2016 projects are well planned and communicated
- Develop CLASP's storage and retention strategy
- Agree the basis for achieving comprehensive digital archives
- Review how best to communicate to Members including encouragement to use CLASPWEB.
- Receive a number of technical briefings as part of widening the technical knowledge of the group.

From Dave Hayward, Chairman of Trustees

A rare dry day though white with frost in early January and it seems unbelievable that in a few weeks those rusty trowels will be hitting the clay and ironstone again! After what seemed at one stage to be an archaeologically bereft year for CLASP 2015 ended up very much on a high note with so much unexpected work and our first successful foray into working with the commercial sector. Let's hope 2016 will carry on the same.

Once we can work with the landowners to establish a detailed work programme information regarding fieldwork details will be circulated by our volunteer co-ordinator Sandra Deacon. Please make sure she has your updated contact details if you want to get this information 'hot off the press'.

There will also be opportunities for a variety of non-digging activities including assisting with identifying and catalogue our extensive stock of physical artefacts. Equally important though will be the need to create a strong digital archive of our various reports, databases and anything else held on computers. If anybody has existing skills or is simply interested in this latter discipline please let the Individual Members representative, Tony Kesten or your society representative know. They can then pass your details on to the appropriate person leading on this work.

We are always looking for new people to become involved with and learn the skills of geophysical survey. Again if you are interested please let us know.

As you all know south and west Northamptonshire has been a major focus for development and construction over recent years. During that process CLASP has endeavoured to become involved in one way or another with any archaeological investigations carried out in relation to these developments. It

cont page 3

is time now to ensure that the community hears the result of these investigations. CLASP will be hosting a day event later in the year, probably in Daventry, both for the wider community and our own members, to hear presentations from the commercial archaeologists who have undertaken this work. Once this is finalised details will be circulated.

We always need new members. You, our existing members, can be the best recruiting sergeants. If you have friends and or relatives who might be interested please bring them along. We also need new Trustees, if you now somebody who has management, financial or similar experience and might be interested then please let us know as well.

From Steve Young, Archaeological Director

A recent unexpected development was the unearthing by metal detectorists, Dave Derby and Alan Standish (NARC), of new finds associated with the location of the 5th century cemetery at Whitehall Farm which had been extensively excavated by CLASP several years ago. The surface finds comprised a brooch and shield boss, the latter of which was left in situ for further archaeological exploration. Their discovery signifies that the fieldwork undertaken by CLASP, although meticulous, had failed to identify both the full extent of the burial ground and to record the total distribution of internments across the site. In addition the chance discovery highlighted two important points: that modern agricultural practice continues to actively erode the subsoil and that this was posing an ongoing threat to any unidentified surviving archaeological stratigraphy. Obviously the nature of the finds clearly confirmed that this was the situation in this case.

CLASP's original exploratory test pitting of the site covered a significant area of the field and located the remains of nine burials which were subsequently excavated. However, the limitation of the methodological approach adopted for siting the test pitting meant that graves might have evaded detection. At the time it appeared that we had identified the nucleus of the cemetery and that further outlying graves were unlikely. However the new finds demonstrate beyond doubt that a number of other burials existed denoting a more extensive distribution over a wider area. Even more intriguing is that this supports the possibilities previously considered of at least two focal points for burial or family groupings within the graveyard and the probability that other

cont page 4

unidentified burials are waiting to be found. An exploratory field visit revealed that the artefacts were associated with two new graves both of which were consistent in date with those previously recorded. Therefore CLASP obtained a licence from the Home Office to exhume any connected skeletal material and the remains of the two individuals were recovered. These are currently being cleaned before submission to scientific analysis.

One burial was of an adolescent female which had been considerably damaged by the plough, decapitating the skeleton and crushing the skull, most of which had been diffused into the surrounding plough soil. Her grave was orientated east/west and she was buried with a brooch, personal knife and blue glass bead consistent with the other excavated female inhumation 5th century. However



The two new burials under excavation, photo: D Martin

the other inhumation was of a male lying on his back with a shield laid on his chest of which the iron shield boss and outer shield rivets had survived. This grave had been subjected to plough damage but was more intact due to its proximity to the other grave which had protected the remains to some extent. Typologically the shield boss can be quite closely dated to the late 6th/early 7th century AD.

shield rivets had survived. This grave had been subjected to plough damage but was more intact due to its proximity to the other grave which had protected the remains to some extent. Typologically the shield boss can be quite closely dated to the late 6th/early 7th century AD.



Anglo Saxon Shield Boss, photo: D Martin

These new burials not only increased the skeletal assemblage available for study from the Whitehall Farm Post Roman cemetery but they proved to be of greater significance than they first appeared. Indeed their excavation will enable us to re-examine the historical context of the site and obtain a greater understanding of the development of the cemetery through time. In short these inhumations prove that there were in fact two cemeteries of dif-

cont page 5

ferent periods associated with the Whitehall Farm site. Both the carbon dating from the earlier excavated skeletons and the dating of the material assemblages from all the burials indicates two relatively small cemeteries one belonging to the mid 5th century with the other in use in the late 6th/early 7th century AD.

The first point to notice is that the burials of the latter grave yard lie immediately on top and across the general area of the earlier one (0.5h) suggesting a synchronicity of layout. Interestingly only in one case does a grave from the later cemetery cut through an earlier internment, however whether this is by design or chance is difficult to determine in relation to the overall layout of the wider burial distribution. Therefore by and large the position of the earlier burials is respected by the latter ones. This signifies a mystical and sacred regard for the area through an extended period of time. Crucially though, it should be noted that although the burial ground can be seen to be in use during both periods there is no sign of continuity between the two phases of internment. There is a gap of up to a hundred years between the active use of either cemetery which has startlingly ramifications for any interpretation of the development of the site. The underlying archaeological profile distinguishing the graves groupings from one another also appears to confirm differences in layout, ritual observance and general burial practice.

Those of the 5th century are aligned east to west with a mixture of head positions at either end of the grave whilst those of the late 6th to early 7th lie north to south without demonstrating a preference for a head position at either end of the grave. The graves of the inhumations within the earliest cemetery were roughly lined and capped with stone although these were found to be much degraded by the plough. The range of inhumations included men; women and children and imply a family or small clanship grouping. None of the graves provided evidence of wooden coffins with the body posture of the 5th century females indicating the bodies were laid on their side while the males were positioned lying flat on their backs. Every individual burial contains personal items usually an iron knife, sometimes weapons for the men and brooches and glass bead jewellery for the women, although a 'toasting fork' and elaborate belt buckle were also retrieved from a female grave. Conservation of the brooch from the adolescent female internment identified the imprint of a cross stitched fabric which is an extremely rare survival on

cont page 6

material recovered from Post Roman funerary assemblages. Only three other examples of roughly the same date are known from Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire and Norfolk. CLASP's principle conservationist Dr Graham



Flax Threads, photo by Dr G Morgan

Morgan has been able to identify flax threads and to conclude that the fabric was most likely linen. This could mean that a choice of fabrics was available to local people other than just woollen garments which would go against currently accepted belief on the interpretation of dress for this period. The other possibility was that the linen was being used for burial shrouds in the mid 5th century graveyard at least for some of the inhumations.

Those graves associated with the late 6th to early 7th century so far only include male skeletons and are characterised by their martial assemblages. Again no evidence of wooden coffins or even the earlier tradition of stone lined and capped graves was found. The skeletons of the men are laid on their backs with each individual buried with a personal knife and a piece of military equipment; in one grave a sword whilst another contained a shield. The central factor common to these graves is the inclusion of only one piece of equipment in each burial, possibly denoting a tokenistic approach to deposition. This being said the equipment itself was of good quality with the sword blade having a steel edge and the shield boss an intricate three piece construction indicative of a skilled manufacturing process beyond the capacity of a local farming community. These burials are best interpreted as representing the arrival of the first English migrants into the area from Mercia after the collapse of British power in the region.

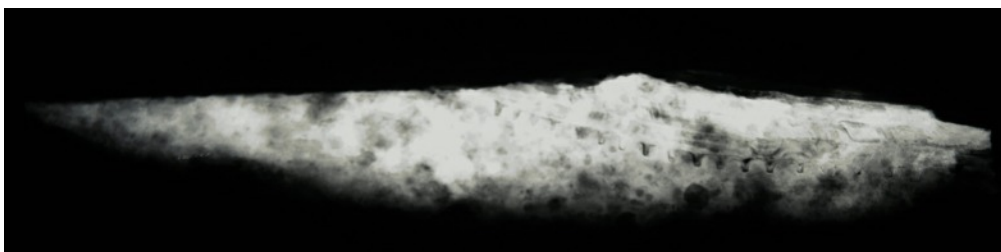
The earlier mid 5th century AD burial group probably are symptomatic of a mixed Christian/ Pagan rite whilst the latter late 6th to early 7th century AD appear to be out and out pagan in their funerary tradition. One might expect that the sequence should be the other way round but there is a perfectly reasonable explanation to account for this apparent conundrum. The original bur-

cont page 7

ials are probably those of Post Roman '*foderati*' whose funeral rite adopts an element of local tradition specifically in this case the orientation of burials. These treaty troops, probably of continental origin, were brought in to help defend surviving estates that formed part of a nominally Christian enclave that might have eventually become part of the British kingdom of '*Calchfynedd*'.

The battle of Bedford in 571AD saw the demise of this eastern British power base and the eventual infiltration of central Northamptonshire and the watershed of the River Nene by English migrants in the succeeding fifty years. Archaeologically speaking the late 6th to mid 7th century cemetery of inhumations characterized by a north to south alignment are the physical remains of these people. These migrants were almost certainly of Mercian stock especially as the water shed of the River Nene was recognised as forming part of the kingdom of Outer Mercia by the mid-7th century AD. The pagan burial ritual observed at Whitehall reflecting the religious realities of the early Mercian kingdom which is known to have remained pagan until the death of King Penda in 655 AD.

Elsewhere the blade retrieved from the trial trenching at Thrupp has been conserved and the initial interpretation of the object as a Saxon short sword or **seax** confirmed. The X ray clearly shows the forge welded steel edge applied to the blade and a decorative 'dog tooth' patterning is visible on the interface between the steel edge and the iron blade. Saxon short swords are rare finds and hopefully when this object and the other artefacts from Whitehall Farm are examined by a specialist more information may be available concerning its possible date range.



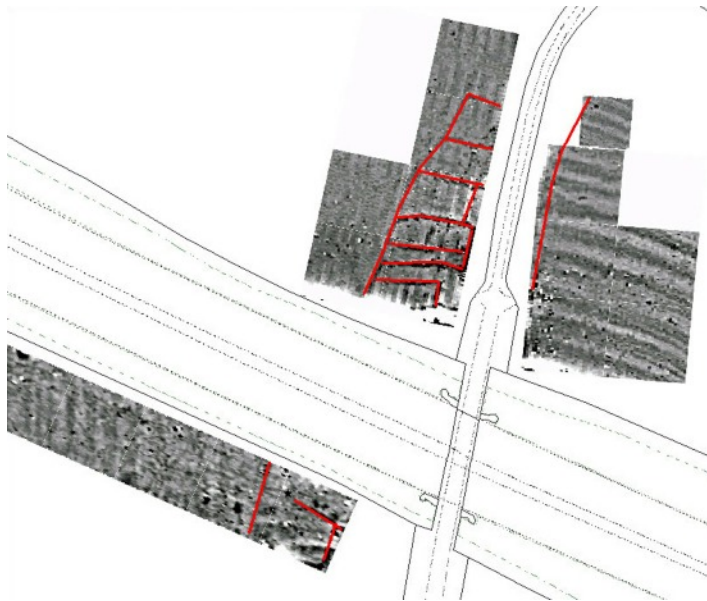
X RAY of **Seax** showing the unique dog tooth steel welded edge to the blade
photo: Dr G Morgan

cont page 8

Finally CLASP volunteers have been involved in an archaeological collaboration with commercial archaeologists from the Museum of London Archaeological Service on the site of a Roman Settlement at Upper Heyford. Following the sharing of information at an earlier stage of investigation CLASP members were offered the chance of further involvement once large scale open area excavation got underway.

Individual members have had not only the opportunity to excavate with professional archaeologists on the site in advance of the construction of the Flore by pass but also to take part in providing additional geophysical survey regarding the extent of the site beyond that available under the development brief. CLASP will also be involved in the Post Excavation work of analysing the pottery and small find assemblages which should also enhance our own more extensive record of Roman settlement within the area.

The Upper Heyford site consisted of a series of enclosure and field boundaries probably representing different phases of activity. Several pits and a possible courtyard surface were also excavated. Initial on site analyses of the pottery and coins suggest a 2nd to 4th century AD occupation with a focus on the 3rd to 4th centuries consistent with the neighbouring settlements already



CLASP Upper Heyford Geophysical Survey, photo F Kay

cont page 9

examined by CLASP. Unfortunately a significant part of the central area of the site was destroyed during the construction of the present M1. Subsequently it will be difficult to understand and characterize the function of the site particularly if the domestic area of occupation was destroyed by the motorway. On a more optimistic note the CLASP geophysical survey has located the layout of a previously unknown series of extensive field and enclosure boundaries (0.5h) to the north of the motorway. These findings are indicative of a type of landscape development called a ladder settlement and this may well be an example of a smaller scale of settlement to be found in the watershed of the River Nene. Upper Heyford's interest lies in the fact that it may represent another as yet not understood type of settlement that would have serviced the larger villa estates we have studied elsewhere in this area in greater depth.

I think this has been a great initiative that has provided a wide range of archaeological opportunities and the chance to show our skills and capabilities. It has enabled individuals to see field work in a different way and for those involved to enhance their archaeological experience. I also believe it has made commercial archaeologists more aware of the value and worth of community archaeological groups like ours in helping to record the heritage resource. I therefore hope there will be opportunities to repeat such collaborations on local sites in the future.

from Sandra Deacon, Coordinator of fieldwork Upper Heyford, the Dig with MOLA

In November 2015 The Museum of London Archaeology unit came to Upper Heyford to investigate a small area of land south of the M1 in anticipation of the Flore bypass going through it. Members of CLASP were invited to assist the professionals, and despite the very cold and muddy conditions eleven of them plus several members of our metal detecting clubs took up the challenge.

The site consisted of a variety of boundary, enclosure, and drainage ditches, and in general seems to have a focus on the 3rd to 4th century This dating is backed up by the pottery assemblage and the coins. There were 20 coins found, and the majority of the Roman ones come from the Constantinian

cont page 10

period, which is early to mid 4th century. There was one earlier coin, a sesterces of Hadrian (2nd C). Apart from the Roman material on the site there were several mediaeval metal objects including pieces of horse harness, and other yet to be identified objects. Some of the pottery suggests that the initial activity on the site started in the early 2nd century.

Apart from the ditches, some pits were excavated, and within one of these was a very nice coin of Constantine with a reverse of Sol Invictus, and it was laid in with the pelvic area of a cow or horse. Several of the ditches had been re-cut, which suggests a continuity of occupation.

At the north end of the site there was the possibility of a surface, and at the west end, an area of burning, which unfortunately disappeared under the baulk so could not be properly excavated or identified.

Since the excavation took place last year further work has been done by the CLASP geophysics team, and they have located an extension of the site to the north of the motorway and slightly to the west of the excavated area, but the overall size of the site suggests quite a small settlement, and that the majority of the occupied area was destroyed when the M1 was put in.

From Jennifer Smith, Harpole Heritage Group

Unfortunately, the planned excavation at 'Harpole 2' had to be cancelled due to the fact that permission did not come through in time from Heritage England. Many people were disappointed but plans are being made for the future.

Our members served refreshments at the 18th Harpole Scarecrow Festival held in September 2015 and some of our ladies catered for the Summer Lunch and Annual Dinner. Two members served refreshments at the CLASP AGM.

Our members enjoyed seeing: 'The Great War through the Magic Lantern' with Kevin Varty, Bruce Bailey spoke about 'Revisiting Pevsner', Ted Barnes came and told us about 'Grandad's War Experiences', Steve Young gave a most informative talk about 'Archaeology in Harpole and the Area' and

cont page 11

Michael Brown gave a presentation called 'A Bouquet of Weeds'. We have been very lucky to have had such good speakers over the years.

We have arranged to have a new sign in School Lane giving directions to the Old School Hall and the Methodist Chapel and we are arranging to have a Finger Post at the top of Larkhall Lane directing visitors to the Primary School Playing fields and the Bowls Club. Both of these have been arranged on behalf of Harpole Parish Council and we are grateful to our Council for supporting us and for the generous grant we receive for archaeology.

From James Aveling, Blisworth Heritage Society

Blisworth Heritage Society has had a series of interesting meetings in the past six months. Our meetings resumed with a talk performed by members of the Society on the life and work of Blisworth's very own railway entrepreneur, Richard Dunkley, who was responsible for the magnificent railway arch on the mainline at Blisworth, much of Wolverton's railway infrastructure and Willesden Junction, among many other projects.

A stimulating meeting about medieval Northampton was followed by one on the Blisworth men who fought in World War I. This meeting was enhanced by the singing of the Hackleton Players and their recital of songs from 'Oh what a lovely war'. At our Christmas social we were shown slides of Northampton in the 1960s and the wholesale destruction of once familiar scenes and buildings. This year we have a project to make use of a pair of wagon wheels rescued from the local ironstone quarry.

From Norman Garnett, The Whitehall Group

There has been only limited field time over the Autumn/Winter period for the Whitehall group although several members have been involved in other projects such as Thrupp Farm (with CLASP), Upper Heyford (with CLASP/MOLA) and the Hillforts Atlas (with CLASP/University of Oxford) As regards the archiving of records and finds, the digitisation and compilation of the Whitehall plans is still ongoing...and ongoing....(although we are led to believe that we are app. 50% there? Huzzah!) together with the classification of the glassware, which is now approaching completion.

cont page 12

The cleaning of the Anglo-Saxon remains continues during the Tuesday afternoon sessions. (Dem bones have never looked better)

Whitehall members volunteered to represent CLASP at the recent Milton Keynes Heritage Association 'open day' in the Milton Keynes library. Attendance was reasonable and there was an interest shown in CLASP and the other displays.

In December, a visit was made to Leicester to the very impressive and well designed King Richard III display and the Leicester Museum. This was organised by Margaret Mackintosh and was well attended, as was the festive, Christmas, Indian lunch which followed; this was on an 'As much as you can eat....' basis and several of us stepped up to the challenge.

A video presentation of the recent Anglo-Saxon excavation was made by a CLASP representative to the Archaeology section of the Northampton U3A.

Late in the year, delivery of a second-hand, 20ft container to the Whitehall site gave the group a desperately needed additional archive storage facility.

We look forward to a continuing (and hopefully, successful) survey and excavation programme in the coming months.

Deadline for the September 2016 Newsletter will be Sunday, September 18, 2016. All photos please at approx 300 dpi and separate from the text with indications of their positions.

List of Contacts for CLASP Associations

Organisation	Contact	Tel
Norton, Northampton PAST	Bill Wiggins	01327 7 843469
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
