



# CLASP

## Community Landscape & Archæology Survey Project NEWSLETTER



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

September 2017, issue

Charity No 1111667

**The CLASP Annual General Meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 4th, 2017 at the Harpole Bowls Club, Larkhall Lane, Harpole, NN7 4DP starting at 7.00 pm. It will be followed by the public lectures, see page 2.**

### Agenda

1. Attendance and Apologies
2. Adoption of the Minutes for the 2016 AGM
3. Matters Arising
4. Welcome by the Chairman
5. Chairman's Report
6. Treasurer's Report
7. Acceptance of the Annual Report
8. Any Other Business - to be advised to the Secretary in advance

**Note that subscriptions (£10) to CLASP are due on September 1st but may be paid at the AGM or sent to Julia Johns, Membership Secretary, 7 Eton Close, Weedon, Northants, NN7 4PJ.**



**Community  
Landscape  
Archaeology  
Survey  
Project**

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## **PUBLIC MEETING**

Wednesday 4th October 2017, 7.30 pm  
(following the AGM at 7 pm)

**'An Update on CLASP Fieldwork'**

Presented by Steven Young  
Archaeological Director, CLASP

**'The villa of Tiberius Claudius Severus: a peep into the  
past'** presented by Roy Friendship-Taylor

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**Admission FREE**  
But donations to CLASP  
Will be welcome

Harpole Bowls Club  
Larkhall Lane  
Harpole  
NN7 4DP

*Raffle, tea/coffee, display stands*

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## From Dave Hayward, Chairman of Trustees

### CLASP Participation Atlas of Hillforts of Britain and Ireland

I intend to restrict my principal submission for this edition to the subject project, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and run by Edinburgh and Oxford Universities. The Project has heavily relied on citizen science for the actual work in the field. During the past few years, led by our late colleague Gren Hatton, CLASP has participated in the subject project by researching and reporting on the hillforts of Northamptonshire, basically that is what is meant by citizen science!

The work was carried out by small teams of our members who visited each hillfort site and recorded data to satisfy a format set by the national team. This raw data was then carefully recorded by Gren to a common standard on proforma required by the project and submitted to Oxford. At the end of the site work Gren produced a supplementary paper looking at more of the background of these hillforts and their purpose; this was submitted to the project team together with a paper prepared by myself discussing the potential early communication routes linking both Northamptonshire's hillforts and those in neighbouring counties.



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Copies of these papers can be seen on the CLASP website at:

[http://www.claspweb.org.uk/large\\_pdf\\_files/CLASP%20IA%20Hillforts%20analysis%20report.pdf](http://www.claspweb.org.uk/large_pdf_files/CLASP%20IA%20Hillforts%20analysis%20report.pdf)

The individual reports for each hillfort are available at:

[http://claspweb.org.uk/?page\\_id=1277](http://claspweb.org.uk/?page_id=1277)

I strongly suggest to those wanting to understand more about Northamptonshire in the pre Romano-British years that they look at these documents.

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Hopefully there will be an opportunity for us to do some more work on this whole area of research in due course, to my mind perhaps one of the major ways forward should be a closer examination of the purpose of each fort and the routes that link them both locally and further afield.

I recently attended the final public event of the Atlas Project, a conference on Hillforts at Edinburgh University with speakers from across the UK, Ireland and mainland Europe. I was pleased to hear Emeritus Professor of Archaeology, Gary Lock, from the Institute of Archaeology at Oxford University make specific reference to those attending about the high quality of our submissions, he likened them to a degree thesis. Considerable interest was also shown in our Hillforts Case Study.

Gren and myself were also invited to attend an awards ceremony to see Gary Lock receive an Oxford University's Vice Chancellor's Award for Public Engagement with Research for Projects. Unfortunately Gren was not well enough to attend, I therefore attended very much as his deputy and representative of CLASP, and perhaps more than that as the sole representative of all the communities nationally who had been involved! The Ceremony was held in the University's Museum of Natural History, a building I would recommend any to visit even if just for the internal architecture.

One phrase that is used in academia today is 'citizen science'; this describes basically what we in CLASP are doing – citizens carrying out research! Have a look at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Citizen\\_science](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Citizen_science) which describes the process.

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

Since the February 2017 Newsletter the Organising Committee has met twice, in April and June. The matters discussed at these meetings included:

**Summer Excavation Projects:** The Committee agreed the summer 2017 excavation projects and signed-off the research briefs for these.

**Publication of all research projects:** We have a duty to report and publish our findings. It was agreed that ahead of all research we should agree

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with the landlord that the work can be published. We will only, exceptionally, take on research where there is no consent, where this helps us complete the research jigsaw and with the prior agreement of the Organising Committee.

**Prioritisation of reports to be completed for publication:** The Committee was briefed on the priority for reports to meet external commitments, with the initial focus on Barn Close (Harpole), Branson's Lane (Towcester), Bannaventa and various Geo-Physics reports.

**Key Roles and Responsibilities:** It is recognised that we need to ensure there is good succession planning for all the key CLASP roles. Yes we need to recruit new members to help with the physical work associated with the excavation activities (it is pleasing to see that we have seen quite a few new faces at the projects so far this summer). However, we also need to ensure that we recruit and train members to take on all the more technical tasks that are so necessary for CLASP to demonstrate its professionalism – planning, photography, digitisation, managing the archive, writing reports, producing promotional material, producing the newsletter, managing the website, desk top research and many more activities.

**Anyone who wishes to use existing skills or learn new ones please raise your hand!**

Please remember the AGM to be followed by the Member meeting is planned for **Wednesday 4th October**. Steve Young and Roy Friendship-Taylor can be counted on to give two interesting presentations.

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**Deadline for the March 2018 Newsletter will be Sunday, February 25, 2018. All photos please at approx 300 dpi and separate from the text with indications of their positions.**

## From Steve Young, Archaeological Director

The main focus of our field work since the last newsletter has continued to be concerned with the exploration of the deserted medieval township of Thrupp and the associated landscape features, near Norton, Northamptonshire. The necessary Post excavation work has been undertaken on the Branson's Lane site, Towcester and the archaeological report for the site is almost completed and will be reviewed internally and externally shortly. Post excavation work also continues on the Whitehall Roman Villa site the complexities of which after the 13 years of excavation are quite considerable due in no small part to the sheer quantity of data retrieved and the depth of detail as well as variety of our records. I must admit I still have a head full of hair but the responsibility of moving forward to publication has sent the colour from grey to white.

The production of other geophysical reports concerned with sites whose field surveys have not yet been written up continues and we have successfully completed work on the large scale geophysical survey of the extensive villa site to the north of Harpole. Work on the CLASP digital archive continues which I'm sure you will recognise is a large scale project in its own right when one considers the amount of archaeological exploration the charity has conducted over the last two decades. In addition we have reached something of a hiatus over the last few months in relation to the Bannaventa Posting Station Whilton Lodge, Northamptonshire initiative but hopefully the remaining elements of the geophysical survey will move forward towards completion by the time of the next newsletter.

Unfortunately since the last newsletter we have sadly lost the fellowship of Gren Hatton whose untimely death recently after an extended period of illness was a great loss to our organisation. He was highly valued by me and other members of CLASP and his contribution as a Trustee, scholar and activist is certainly an inspiration to us all. I shall miss his enthusiasm, drive, support and friendship but I'm sure he would be heartened to know that CLASP is a far better organisation because of his involvement than it would have been without him

In relation to the fieldwork for 2017 we returned to finish the exploratory work we carried out within a small wooded copse to the west of the deserted township of Thrupp, on the site of a possible medieval moat. We undertook

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an initial investigation into a new area at the site connected to an up-standing ruin situated on the inside of the 'moated' enclosure in order to assess the status and condition of the ruin. Finally we also excavated some test pits within the 'moated' enclosure to look for any medieval occupation debris.

The latest analysis of the trial trenches appears to contradict the accepted interpretation of the site as a medieval moat. Our excavation demonstrates that the ditch was more likely a Victorian drainage ditch constructed to assist in the evacuation of ground water from the farm buildings at Thrupp Lodge which we believe was subject to periodic flooding. The ditch may also have marked the boundary of a Victorian orchard as evident on early maps. This interpretation has subsequently been confirmed by more detailed fieldwork and reassessment of the geophysical survey data along the neighbouring field boundary which shows that the medieval road way aligned from west to east in Six Acre field actually originally ran across what was allegedly the southern ditch of the moat whose existence at that date can now be seen as incorrect. This southern part of the site now appears to be remains of a 20th century pond relating to later redevelopment of the Victorian gardens and orchards.

This interpretation also helps explain the problematic spacial relationship between the moat and the focus of the deserted medieval township of Thrupp further to the east. One might have expected a closer integration between a potential secular focus to the site and the general layout of the settlement. The lack of any evidence for any medieval domestic activity from the test pits within the supposed medieval 'moated' enclosure is also indicative of a Victorian orchard area rather than the location of a medieval manor site. In fact the few medieval sherds retrieved from the area would be best described as residual rather than stratigraphically significant. However on a contradictory note a cursory investigation of the ruin revealed the foundations of an earlier building beneath the current ruin on a slightly different alignment. The date and character of the structure are as yet unknown but it is possible the earlier structure was an outlying tenement of the medieval township only further work will resolve this development.

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In the summer we returned to Thrupp Farm to explore the extent and layout of any potential medieval tenements to the north of the B4036 and to the west of the Farm itself adjacent to the area of buildings and road way excavated last year on the other side of the road. A 35m trial trench was excavated parallel to the road to ascertain the north-eastern extent of the medieval township. Recently the area has been planted with trees to provide a woodland barrier to the southern approach to the farm and the opportunity for further research in the future will be restricted as the trees mature. Therefore it was imperative to undertake the field work if we were to understand the development and character of the wider site.



Medieval Boundary Wall

Only two features of archaeological significance were observed during the excavation. The first was a ditch which had also been detected and identified during our geophysical survey of the field and a stone foundation for a boundary wall for an animal enclosure or medieval garden plot. Interestingly metal

detecting of the trench and spoil heap revealed three Roman coins and a Dolphin Brooch. Two of the coins are 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> century whilst the other is probably 2<sup>nd</sup> century and had been pierced to be used as a pendant. There significance is difficult to interpret and may not be related to any activity during the Roman period.

In relation to the features observed in the trial trench it is evident that the row of tenements excavated last year to the SW, on the opposite side of the B4036, do not continue this far to the NE. Although the geophysical survey

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indicates extensive archaeological activity in the area this was mostly likely to have been agriculturally based related rather than domestic. Therefore the focus of the township was probably more constricted than previously be-

lieved and situated further to the W and SW.



Section across Medieval Boundary Wall

The Post Excavation process of the excavation at Branson's Lane, Towcester enabled us to gain a glimpse of the utilization of yards and outbuildings in Georgian and Victorian Towcester. It also enabled us to start to have an apprecia-

tion of the material lifestyle and experience of the local inhabitants but probably due to the limited extent of the site available for exploration failed to conclusively prove one way or the other that the area was part of an extra mural suburb outside the southern defences of Lactodurum.

A potential building, mosaic tesserae and pottery including a Spanish amphora handle bearing the stamp PVBLIVS IVLIVS CRISPVS were noted as being recorded at 65/69 Watling Street immediately to the SE of Branson's Lane site late last century. However the existence of extra-mural occupation this far south within the vicinity of the excavation site was thought to be problematic and remained unverified hence the need to explore through excavation the chronological spread of material from the Branson's Lane site.

The Roman pottery assemblage from Branson's Lane indicated activity in the wider general area covering the period from the 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. Unfortunately the sherds were not associated with any features or structures and appeared to be deposited from inundation or flooding which has always

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characterised this area into the modern era. The assemblage over a 100 sherds included in excess of twenty fabrics both fine and coarse wares but the fragments were individual unrelated pieces and were not abraded suggesting a quick and undisturbed depositional process conducive to a deposit derived from flooding. Therefore it is unlikely that a continuous ribbon of urban development emanating from the south gate of Lactodurum stretched along Watling Street to this area of Towcester although individual developments like that noted at 65/69 Watling Street may have existed.

Various other activities and options have or are available for CLASP to become involved with or make use of to enhance our ability to interpret our findings from the fieldwork. Progress is being made with the bone assemblage from the Whitehall Roman Villa. The hare bones are now part of a wider academic study and the wolf jaw is being examined in detail to try and find out whether it is from the continent or was indigenous. You will remember that this could have a significant impact on how archaeozoologists understand of the habitat and role of the wolf within the Roman lowland rural landscape. In addition we now have the capacity to produce 3D flythrough images of our geophysical results which will enhance CLASP's ability to understand and present our data between ourselves and the wider public.

We are hopefully going to be involved in the coming months with a joint research project with MOLA on the Iron Age hillfort of Borough Hill which should offer fieldwork and training opportunities as well as adding new data to our general understanding of the areas archaeological heritage. Finally we will return shortly to explore the Anglo Saxon cemetery at Whitehall in an attempt to locate any remaining graves which have escaped detection and excavation.

I hope you will continue to support all these initiatives as we continue with our programme of fieldwork and I look forward to the interesting developments ahead.

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### **An Obituary for Gren Hatton, from Dave Hayward**

I first met Gren at the CLASP Open Meeting at Paulerspury Village Hall in 2010 when he attacked my brain with his theory on paired settlements across the boundary of the Dane-law! By then he already had a strong

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reputation in Northamptonshire for his historical and archival research which had culminated in his own website on West Northamptonshire history. This encounter immediately made me aware that here was a well motivated and driven person of high intellect who CLASP had to have onboard. After some discussion he quickly became a member and then, after further gentle persuasion, a Trustee.

He very quickly made his mark both with stimulating research and discussion on various archaeological and historical topics. His skill in instigating and developing an image for CLASP was also quick to appear with the 'house style' for our printed documents with which I am sure you are all now familiar. You will note this is in Calibri font, something that he insisted upon! Perhaps as important as the 'house style' were the 'case studies' that he saw as a professional way for CLASP to portray a short, sharp message to a varied audience. These have worked well and we will continue to produce them to ensure his drive is not lost. The next will be that on Harpole, one he unfortunately did not manage to see into print.

Commencing with discussions late in 2010, he saw a need to archaeologically investigate a hill in his neighbouring parish of Barby. This hill, known as Barby Hill stands to the north-west of the village overlooking the Rainsbrook which marks the county boundary with Warwickshire. This boundary was a very important factor with Gren's developing research into the Iron Age tribal activity in the area and his beloved King Street. This interest led to the formal creation of the Barby Hill Project Group in early 2011 that, after his determination in obtaining funding and local volunteers, subsequently undertook an investigation on the Hill. The results of this work, coupled with commercial work on the adjacent reservoir, revealed a significant metal working settlement on the Hill. An intriguing result that was complementary to commercial work being undertaken in the wider area. Our understanding of the Iron Age peoples in north-west Northamptonshire has been enhanced by 100% thanks to Gren.

In 2014 I discussed with Gren a forthcoming national project to compile an atlas of all the hill-forts in Britain and Ireland, we agreed, after further discussion in committee, that CLASP should research and record those in

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Northamptonshire. He led the project producing outstanding results both for local history and the content of the Atlas itself. Gren's work led to a spoken thank you from the platform at the final conference for the project in Edinburgh and also it made a significant contribution to the Atlas project receiving an Oxford University's Vice-Chancellor's award for public participation in research. Unfortunately he was unable to attend either of these events as they were just a few days before his death, however I attended both and ensured his contribution was recognised on each occasion.

His remarkable contribution to CLASP will never be forgotten, those of you who attended his funeral will understand when I say, 'rest well in that burying ground' , you fought the battle well and kept going until the End.

Thanks!

Dave Hayward, Chair of Trustees

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### **From Jim Aveling, Blisworth Heritage Society**

The past few months have seen increasing use made of our new archives cabinet which is housed in the parish church, thanks to the kind offices of our Rector. During the summer months and during the recent Blisworth Canal Festival a great deal of useful knowledge was acquired and exchanged.

Unfortunately the illness of our speaker caused the cancellation of this year's music concert and it is hoped it can be rearranged for next summer. A well attended outing was made to the newly refurbished Delapre Abbey earlier in the summer and those attending were full of praise for the changes which have been made there.

We have enjoyed a varied programme of talks and there has been a small increase in the numbers joining the Society and attending the monthly meetings.

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

Harpole Heritage Group has had another year with excellent speakers from whom we have learned a lot.

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We have heard about 'The Rise and Fall of Percy Pilcher' with Roy Smart. David Adams told us the history of 'Borough Hill' then we heard about the 'Mary Rose' from Bill Davies. We took a tour of Northampton when Richard Deacon showed us some 'Old Photographs' of the town.

We had our AGM and Keith Steggles talked about 'My Father – an Enigma', Phillip Warner from the National Leather museum gave us very interesting facts on 'The Story of Leather'. We learned a great deal of history and were entertained by 'William the Butler' and when our August speaker was unable to come, David Adams stepped in at short notice and spoke about 'The Families of Ashby St. Ledgers and the interesting church'.

Our catering ladies provided a delicious Summer Lunch and we reviewed our Constitution. The Cory family are the oldest family in Harpole and last year they disbanded their Society and donated a sum of money to our group (they have now become 'The Cory Friends'). We were pondering on what to spend this money on and one of our members suggested that we donate it towards helping to restore the Cory/Scriven tomb which is in need of restoration. Our members decided to make the money up to £1,000.00 which will help towards the repair.

Several times, I (Jennifer Smith) have taken small groups around the village looking at industrial buildings – buildings which have produced boot and shoes or other items. When the Cory Friends visited recently they were taken to see these buildings and then we enjoyed a lunch at The Turnpike restaurant. I also led a walk around the Lower half of Harpole to look at older buildings. Finally, I also attended the Parish Meeting to give a report on the activities of Clasp and to thank them for their support.

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## **From Tony Kesten, CLASP Participation in the 'MK@50' Heritage Event, June 2017**

**Context:** Milton Keynes was first designated as a New Town in 1967 and one of the events held this year to mark this 50th Anniversary was a Heritage Festival, organised by the MK Heritage Association and held in Campbell Park close to the MK Shopping Centre. As a longstanding member, CLASP

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was happy to participate and show some of the relevant archaeological work we have done.

**Theme:** CLASP decided to use the theme of 'Roman Watling Street' – the link between Milton Keynes and West Northants. Two shots of our stand follow. We had three features. The majority of the stand showed displays about the sites we had investigated. - from Lactodorum (Towcester), up past the Whitehall Roman Villa, through Bannventa to Thrupp. We were lent reproduction tesserae by Cheryl Butler of the Deanshanger Historical Society and young people, as shown on the left side below, were encouraged to design mosaics. Ian Graham, who can be seen at the left side of the picture below, took photos of the 76 results and every participant was given a Certificate, recording their participation in Latin and English.



At the right side of the picture can be seen CLASP Member Ruth Downie, the author of the detective-type fiction set in Roman times, shown here in period costume. Ruth enabled visitors to handle finds.

### Similarities in the design and layout of posting stations along Watling Street

#### Watling Street:

Linking Roman Milton Keynes and Northants



There is some evidence to suggest that the Roman civil engineers who engineered and constructed Britain's major roads may have worked to carefully developed standardised basic plans, adapted as necessary to accommodate the specific local topography.

Similarities are evident in the design and overall layout of the four posting stations along the Watling Street in this area:

- Tripontium and Bannventa are topographically very similar sites — both lie on south-facing promontories, and both include small streams leading down the west side of the promontory.
- Likewise, Lactodorum and Magiovinium are similar sites — both are on flat plains, both are constructed on the south-east side of small but navigable rivers, and both also feature Roman roads leading SSW from the centre of the town.
- In addition, all four sites show evidence of two stages of construction of the defences — a large early enclosure, subsequently re-fashioned in the late 3C to enclose a much smaller area.



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A copy of the certificate

As well as Ian and Ruth, a number of other CLASP members, Dave Hayward, Sarah Atherton, Margaret McIntosh, Jim Aveling, Hilary Callow, Steve Young, Rob Close, Gren Hatton (who produced the material in the display cases and the accompanying case studies) and Tony Kesten gave up some of their time to help. The event, which also featured several groups of re-enactors, is believed

to have attracted 6,000 on Saturday and 5,500 on Sunday. We slightly moderated the heat in our marquee with an electric fan which attracted some of the stand's visitors! It is visible in front of Ian.

The effort we put into the event has undoubtedly enhanced our already positive relationship with the Milton Keynes Heritage Association as well as, possibly as importantly, generating good contacts among the community in Milton Keynes.

Finally, here are six of the 76 mosaics that were designed. We hope that the rest will appear on our website.



## 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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