



CLASP

Community Landscape & Archæology Survey Project NEWSLETTER



ROMAN RESEARCH TRUST

Website: www.claspweb.org.uk

September 2018, issue 27

Charity No 1111667

The Annual General Meeting of CLASP

The above meeting will be held at

Harpole Bowls Club

Larkhall Lane

Harpole

Northampton

NN7 4DP

at

19.00hrs on 3rd October 2018

Agenda

- 1. Apologies**
- 2. Triennial Elections**
 - 2.1 Trustees**
 - 2.2 Chair**
 - 2.3 Secretary**
 - 2.4 Treasurer**
- 3. Receive and approve Minutes of 2017 meeting**
- 4. Matters arising**
- 5. Report by Chair**
- 6. Report by Treasurer**
- 7. AOB – to be notified to the current Chair prior to the start of the meeting and should be urgent and non-controversial**

Note that subscriptions (£10) 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

AGM & PUBLIC MEETING

Wednesday 3rd October 2018,

AGM at 7.00pm

Public Meeting at 7.30pm

Historic Towcester Survey

Historic Buildings Survey looking
at pre 1750 buildings in Towcester

- Brian Giggins

CLASP Technical Update

- Stephen Young
Archaeological Director, CLASP

Admission FREE

but donations to CLASP
always welcome!

Raffle, light refreshments, display stands

Harpole Bowls Club

Larkhall Lane

Harpole

NN7 4DP

£10 - Join us or renew your membership on the night - £10

www.claspweb.org.uk

From Dave Hayward, Chairman of Trustees

Another six months, another year poses the question what is new. Perhaps a developing sense of realism that CLASP must ensure it is properly resourced, not overstretch itself and ensure that we have policies that provide for your Trustees to be prepared for all eventualities. I must thank Rob Close for having the foresight to write a discussion paper for our last meeting that presented options to deal with a vision of growth for the organisation, standing still or even retraction. Our initial discussions were realistic and did identify some weaknesses that will require attention. If we are to succeed, perhaps the most significant considerations are finance and the recruiting of new members who are prepared not only to be archaeologists but to take onboard all the various roles to ensure the charity retains its credibility and therefore moves forward.

It is satisfying to note that we have several new faces, younger and older, who are prepared to get involved with the running of CLASP, perhaps we are edging forward on this front; we do however need more members who will take us forward in years to come. It is essential that we have members who are prepared to acquire knowledge to analyse technical issues and assist with preparing relevant parts of final reports. This will then relieve the Archaeological Director by enabling him to delegate this work so that he can concentrate on analysis of the wider evidence to complete his part of these reports.

We have decided to increase the charge for those participating in our fieldwork; it will now be £10 per week or part of a week. This money will provide for the provision of 'loos' on site and also help with the hiring of excavators to remove the overburden at the start of our dig. This is still much cheaper than most other sites, some charge more than £10 per day.

Just a few words about our fieldwork this year. Firstly I must give my thanks to Fred Kay and his geophysics team for their outstanding discoveries at Bannaventa and Borough Hill, Daventry. As with our metal detecting teams, they have had their work curtailed by the dry summer that has made the ground so hard to work.

From my perspective, having three weeks on different sites at Thrupp has

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focused our minds on the overall location and has illustrated both the continuity of human activity in the area and the problems with superficial and ephemeral features and a mixed and difficult to understand geology.

I do hope to see you all at the AGM and Open Meeting, please try to bring a friend or relative so that hopefully we will be able to spread the word and achieve an increase in membership.

From Rob Close, Chairman of the Organising Committee

In the last six months the Committee has met three times. The prime focus of the Committee remains on the oversight and completion of projects; trying to ensure that there we have sufficient persons available to carry out our diverse activities and ensuring good communication from and to members.

Weekend projects: Three excavations were planned for August and September. A decision was made to respond to the request of some members to have at least one of the digs over a weekend. Unfortunately, we did not see any new faces over the weekend we selected. **If you are interested in principle in attending a weekend dig do let us know and why you could not attend this year's.** We do see it important to have some weekend activities to cater for those that are still otherwise engaged in the week.

General Data Protection Regulation Policy: The Committee oversaw the implementation of actions to address the new regulations. We believe that all members have confirmed agreement to CLASP retaining their contact information and providing appropriate information to them. Members will be asked to renew this confirmation when completing the online membership forms or when renewing their subscription at the AGM. Salma Pervez a new Trustee, has stepped up to take on the role of Data Protection Officer.

Digital Archive: The Committee was briefed at its July meeting about the current status of the digital archive. This currently consists of 190GB and 62,000 files on a detachable hard drive and duplicated on a second detachable Hard Drive held at a different location. This protects CLASP's data from a major incident in one location. Not all CLASP's data is yet included though. A digital archiving group is considering how much of this data is of interest to members and what should be accessible over the Website.

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CLASP Public Meeting Wednesday 3rd October: We are at Harpole Bowls Club again this year because of its excellent facilities and the great support we get from the helpers there. This year we welcome Brian Giggins speaking about pre -1750 buildings in Towcester. (Almost yesterday Additionally, Steve Young will be providing his interpretation of findings from the three digs. This should be an informative evening. **Do hope you can make it.**

From Steve Young, Archaeological Director

Our summer programme of fieldwork was altered slightly for a variety of cogent reasons and this has meant that the anticipated excavation on the Post Roman and Anglo-Saxon cemeteries at Whitehall Farm has been postponed until next year when I am sure circumstances will be more conducive to further fieldwork. Nevertheless, to assuage any disappointment and for those who are particularly interested in the ongoing and evolving interpretation of these burials, I have included in this article some current thoughts on noteworthy aspects of the site.

Consequently, the main direction of CLASP field work over the summer was focused on a series of trial trenches investigating geophysical anomalies located from field surveys on two sites in the parish of Norton. The first is associated with the exploration of a complex of enclosures located in the northern area of hinterland of the Roman Posting Station of Bannnaventa lying to the west of the Long Buckby crossroads on Watling Street the A5. Our intention is to characterise and profile the potential ditched enclosure features and archaeological remains connected to this part of the site, establish the link between these features and the small town, and if possible provide a chronology of their development and use.

The other area of interest was concerned with the continued exploration of the deserted medieval township of Thrupp and the associated landscape features, near Norton, Northamptonshire. Two trial trenching excavations are planned, the first to the south of the B4036 in an area between and adjacent to an earlier excavation of medieval tenements and a large apsidal fronted building which may have been the location of a chapel associated with the 'township' of Thrupp; the second trial trench excavation is situated to the north of the B4036 opposite the one previously described.

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The initial excavation rationale was to expose and investigate any structures as well as explore the known site of the apsidal building and any other features identified through geophysical survey. It was also hoped to enhance our understanding of the chronological development of this part of the deserted medieval village. This initial fieldwork has been completed and will be reported on here, whereas the work on the second trial trench will not be completed until after this newsletter has been circulated and therefore that will be reported on in the next issue.

In the case of the enclosure complex, several findings have emerged, some of which are potentially quite illuminating whilst others are more intriguing if not frustrating. The anomalies observed during the geophysical survey indicated the existence of a large rectangular enclosure with its longest side aligned north-south. This feature appeared to contain internal partitioning in the form of ditches or drainage gullies and the potential for a domestic structure. The enclosure is like several others in the vicinity of Bannaventa and could be interpreted as evidence of a mixed farming economy. However, what is not clear is when these features were being utilised. The geophysical survey of the wider site indicates a variety of field systems and enclosures servicing the development of the Posting Station but it would be foolish to interpret them as a contemporary single stage event in operation throughout the prehistoric and Roman period. Neither have we as yet confirmed whether these satellite sites are independent settlements or form part of the local agricultural infrastructure operated by people from the larger settlement.

The trial trench revealed two archaeological conundrums, first that geophysical anomalies, although strongly suggestive when analysed on computer, may not have the same physical impact in the ground. Secondly these anomalies can be extremely ephemeral in the subsoil and make archaeological recognition very difficult. This was the case here and although the matrix or fill of the ditches could be intermittently observed, their overall layout and profile could not be obtained. Archaeologically frustrating as this was, the team were able to find and uncover a surface within the 'ditched' enclosure. Interpretation of this surface, although difficult, does offer a hypothetical viewpoint of what was going on here that can potentially be extrapolated to explain chronologically other similar features in the vicinity of Bannaventa. At least this would provide a possible scenario with which to examine other similar characteristic elements contained in the wider landscape.

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Geophysical Survey Summer Excavated Targets
(1 Iron Age Enclosure, 2 Medieval track way, 3 Next trial Trench)

The metallated area appeared to constitute a substantial exterior surface within the enclosure and could be dated on the evidence of the pottery sherds to the Late Iron Age or possibly Pre-Conquest period. Interestingly, should this dating evidence be typical of these distinctive enclosures, it could have ramifications for our interpretation of the earliest development of the landscape that later evolved into the Roman Posting Station. At least these findings supply a potential chronological anchor against which the results of future fieldwork can be arrayed. Subsequent confirmation of these findings at other similar sites will then begin to inform our understanding of the general development of the hinterland agricultural landscape.

Besides the Late Iron Age pottery sherds, a fragment of iron slag was recovered from the metallated surface, which implies iron working within the vicinity as observed elsewhere in the wider locality. Metal detecting of the surrounding environment of the trial trenches also produced three Roman coins: a 3rd century AD coin of the emperor Carausius and two heavily worn 4th century AD examples. A hammered silver short cross penny of Henry III was also recovered, but all of these coins only indicate ongoing activity across the broader field in subsequent periods of time.

The trial trench at Thrupp Grounds to the south of the B4036 was a little more revealing in terms of the archaeology observed but perhaps just as enigmatic as the previous fieldwork in the information it revealed to us about the

deserted medieval township of Thrupp. Our trial trench revealed extensive rubble deposits presumably from the demolition of the medieval cottages undertaken by Daventry Priory in the late 15th century AD, which were particularly evident at the western end. The rubble was evidently systematically spread across the external surfaces of the 'tofts' and a trackway, as could be seen by the deposition of the material. Interestingly the metalled spread at the eastern end lacked the density and depth of rubble apparent elsewhere and appeared to be more heavily robbed out and eroded.

No structures were located in the trial trench but the trackway previously observed in an earlier excavation further to the west was relocated and the cambered surface cleared. The trackway was metalled and was quite wide with



Medieval Trackway

the ability to take two carts at once, operating in different directions. This, with what we already know from other work indicates a regular lay out and well organised settlement with a level of village infrastructure in excess of the needs of a community without market rights or facilities. Most disappointingly no trace was found of the overall plan of the large structure known to be associated with the wider area around the east end of the trial trench.

Finds from the excavation, although enigmatic, do provide clues as to activity on the site. In particular the recovery of a bronze shroud pin and possibly fragments of jumbled re-interred human bone hint that the eastern area of the trial trench may indeed be connected to a possible chapel burial or burials. One thing to keep in mind here is that the

chapel survived the demolition of the village and could have been demolished and robbed more thoroughly after it become defunct in the early 16th century, which is what we maybe observing in the archaeological material from the excavation. Meanwhile the recovery of a medieval horse shoe immediately

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below the debris level could be interpreted as slight but supporting evidence of the muscle power required in the systematic spreading of the rubble debris from the medieval cottages by agents of Daventry Priory to forestall any return of the previous occupants.

One other feature was observed towards the centre of the trial trench, which upon excavation turned out to be a ditch that had been noted during the previous geophysical survey. It was neither deep or wide and reflected the ephemeral state of many of the ditches encountered this year. No dating evidence was recovered but the feature is probably to be interpreted as a 'toft' Boundary.

With regard to the Whitehall Farm cemeteries, the following is in part a resume of facts from the last newsletter but includes a further statement of some new lines of enquiry. The recovery of the partial and complete skeletal remains of 17 individuals has enabled us to postulate ever more detailed interment approaches towards burial. It is noteworthy that all the intact burials from the different chronological assemblages are individually interred with no examples of multiple occupancy of graves, prone burials or deviant overtones to deposition evident amongst the different assemblages. This implies a very careful, considered and consistent approach to burial at each stage of activity at the burial site. This contextural meaning is difficult to interpret as many other comparable cemeteries contain examples of these more exotic burial practices. Only total excavation of the entire distribution of burials will probably elucidate and explain this approach at the site.

I am now quite sure that the current skeletal assemblage doesn't represent the full extent of interments within the cemeteries and that several more skeletons are awaiting location and excavation which would mean a significant increase in the final total for the different phases of use and will provide a stronger statistical bases in the final interpretation.

Re-examination, particularly of the semi-crouched sword burial, appears to suggest and support a three-phase subdivision of activity across the cemetery. Each phase reflects different forms of deposition that exhibit unique characteristics associated with the burial process. This burial in particular no longer appears to be associated with the late 6th early 7th century north/south aligned burials but to belong to a latter phase of deposition where interments are no longer cognisant of earlier burials.

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The earliest burials which form the largest group on the site are currently compose 13 individuals and includes men, woman, adolescents and babies. The overall grave distribution appears to indicate discreet family groupings as opposed to individual segregation by gender or age. A universal feature is that they are all roughly aligned east/west and appear to be laid out in ordered ranks adjacent the boundary ditch of a trackway on the north-west side of the cemetery. All the skeletons are extended inhumations, with male skeletons laid on their backs and the females in a mixture of back and side positions.

This assemblage can also be further divided into those with and those without grave goods. Strikingly those containing grave goods have their heads positioned at the east end of the grave whilst those without grave goods have their heads at the west end. The latter female skeletons are always laid on their backs, the former on their sides. This is a striking intentional act that belies a rational approach to individual deposition, most likely related to deeply entrenched beliefs.

These characteristic depositional interment features could be interpreted as evidence of a different burial right indicative of either purely Christian or a mixed burial tradition reflecting a more pagan emphasis. Those female skeletons with no grave goods, lying on the backs with the head in the west end of the grave are Christian whilst those with grave goods lying on their side with the head positioned at the east end of the grave more likely to be reflecting pagan sympathies. It could also be hinting at an ethnic diversity or cultural tradition, at least amongst the woman in the population represented within the cemetery. Continuity of population, ethnic integration or ethnic cleansing are difficult things to observe in archaeology and therefore are of immense importance to study when the opportunity is afforded.

The Carbon-dating we already have implies an internment range in this earliest phase of the cemeteries use centred between 420 - 480AD which is supported by the dates ascribed to the grave goods. These burials correspond nicely with the timber phase hall construction over the site of the Roman villa by the mid the 5th century AD which was destroyed by fire by the mid-6th century AD. The individuals buried in the cemetery are the people who would have lived in this building.

The best interpretation of the armed male burials of this group is still that they represent the remains of '*foderati*' settled on a Post Roman estate with

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their associated kinship groupings. The Christian female burials might represent additions to the group from local surviving Sub-Roman communities implying a level of integration. Hopefully some of the scientific work will finally cast some light on these possibilities. A further unique aspect of these burials was that the adult males were buried in stone lined and stone capped graves with the heads positioned at the west end whilst the woman and children are never treated in this elaborate way.

This differential approach to interment plus the inclusion of appropriate cultural objects based on the sex of the individual involved highlights the gender specific character of the burial rites and perhaps hints at the relative social standing of the men and women within their culture. In any case, the archaeological evidence implicitly points to cultural choices and value judgements even if we don't fully understand them.

The second phase of burials is a small group of distinctive graves which lie immediately to the south of the 5th century burials. Each grave is aligned north/south and contains extended male inhumations lying on his back. The heads of the three individuals are positioned at the south end of the grave but none of these graves are stone lined or stone capped as with the 5th century burials.

The distribution of these graves also appears to respect the other earlier interments and indicates a clear linear layout pattern. These burials are also characterised by the inclusion of grave goods, namely shield bosses and spears. The shield bosses are quite intricate three-piece constructions implying a specialist workshop origin rather than homemade production and indicate a late 6th to early 7th century date of manufacture and hence date of deposition. These burials are almost certainly pagan and probably represent the earliest Mercian penetration into the locality, particularly as the kingdom of Mercia was still pagan until the mid-6th century and the area is known to have formed part of Outer Mercia by the 8th century AD indicating an expansion into our area. However, it doesn't appear these individuals are battle casualties, but the fact these skeletons are exclusively male and have spears and shields is indicative of a militaristic grouping. Interestingly we have a squatter phase on the old villa site subsequent to the Post Roman activity that is associated with pottery dated between 450 and 850 AD which could be associated with these migrants. Obviously, we need carbon dates etc for these skeletons to confirm and support our interpretation.

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Our final distinguishable burial tradition is the semi-crouched sword burial which is unique amongst the entire assemblage. Aligned east/west it cuts through a grave probably dating to the 5th century AD with its carbon date implying no easily recognisable link with the late 6th/early 7th century burials either as previously thought. The head at the west end of the grave implies Christianity but the inclusion of a sword and knife although reflecting the status of the grave obscures the overall meaning of the burial rites involved. Interestingly, X rays show the sword is pattern welded with a steel edge on one side, making an effective weapon if not of the best quality.

This at least demonstrates that the sword was a real weapon and isn't an iron blade substitute. The burial may have been a 'one off' and probably should be taken as the last interment on the cemetery site. It also has strong parallels with another sword burial found near Wollaston further down-stream along the River Nene the particulars of which could help enhance our understanding of this type of burial rite.

Hopefully the interpretative value of CLASP fieldwork will become more evident as all the disparate strands of research are brought together and we progress our understanding of the historical story of our locality. See you all soon at the next 'dig' or the AGM.

Deadline for the March 2019 Newsletter will be Sunday, February 17, 2019. All photos please at approx 300 dpi and separate from the text with indications of their positions.

From Jennifer Smith, Harpole Heritage Group

Harpole Primary School are pleased with the new display of Roman Artefacts found in Harpole over the last few years, which was completed in the spring. We have heard about "William Knibb and the Slave Trade" and that some slave trading still goes on today. We found the talk about "Lampton Hall" very interesting although Lampton is not far from Harpole. not many people have visited it but plan to do so soon.

As we have Roman Villas in the parish, we were interested to hear about "Chester Farm" and all the work going on there and we are planning a group visit there in 2019.

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Our members and friends enjoyed a Summer Lunch and we are looking forward to helping out at the Scarecrow Festival in early September. The Study Leaflet on the Double Courtyard Villa has been distributed and all have found it informative.

Best wishes Jennifer Smith

From Tony Kesten, CLASP makes the Grade with GRIDLINE

We're all familiar with the National Grid (NG) network of electricity pylons that crosses the country carrying electricity. NG also has a network of underground cables. The landowners who rent NG the right to cross their land are known to NG as 'Grantors'. CLASP has two Grantors:- Nick Adams, who owns the land of Whitehall Farm is one and Dave Hayward, the Chair of CLASP's Trustees is the other (there are cables passing over his house!). NG produces a quarterly magazine called 'Gridline' that it sends to every Grantor at no cost. Dave realised that this might be a way for CLASP to generate some goodwill and favourable publicity. He asked Trustee Tony Kesten to take on the task.

It turned out that NG has its own journalist so Tony's task was to agree the approach and arrange for those concerned to meet at Whitehall Farm one Tuesday morning, ahead of the usual Tuesday afternoon gathering. The resultant article has as its highlights an interview with metal detectorist Dave Derby and one with Nick that is notable for Nick's reflections on his responsibility to the community for facilitating the investigation that, of course, led to the uncovering of the Whitehall Roman Villa. The text of the article, which also includes comments from Steve Young, Dave Hayward and Dave's colleague Alan Standish is now on the CLASP Website, with NG's permission. Anyone who hasn't read it is recommended to do so. Tony Kesten has a hard copy available for loan to anyone who can't see it online.

From Jim Aveling, Blisworth Heritage Society

An interesting visit to the National Leather Collection in Northampton was attended by many members of the Society. This followed a talk about the Collection by members of the staff at one of our monthly meetings. Earlier in the year we were regaled by Nicholas Warliker with tales of his career and

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experiences as a noted gardener. His humour and interesting recollections of his time in the service of the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester at Barnwell Manor were particularly well received. In addition he wove his period into a review of the last one hundred years of English gardening.

Headmaster of Blisworth for 23 years, John Basham told of his experiences at the chalk face and former pupils were able to recall their time at the school. Richard York, a multi-talented musician, held his audience captive at a very well attended meeting in the Parish Church. He gave us all a delightful insight into the world of eighteenth century music.

From Norman Garnett, The Whitehall Group

“Backroom” work at Whitehall continues with the archiving of large number of plans & photographic records from the Whitehall villa.. The plans are being digitised by “tracing” the scanned copies of the original drawn plans with these records then stored electronically. The photographs are recorded, annotated & titled before also being stored electronically.

Whitehall members have attended recent CLASP projects at Thrupp Fields on 3 separate digs. Initially, a 30 metre trench was cleared by a mechanical digger before manual clearing & investigation took place. Luckily the weather has held although the dry conditions has meant strata with the consistency of concrete.

To date, there have been a limited number of finds but extensive areas of random stonework & ‘paved’ areas.

Whitehall’s ‘Away Day’ to the outskirts of Birmingham was organised by Steve Young and was a full day comprising of visits to Old Yardley Village - a conservation area with examples of Tudor & Jacobean domestic architecture; to St Edburgha's Church built in 13th C (complete with Church warden on the day); to Hobbs Moat, an ancient, large and clearly defined double-moated site; there was a guided tour of Blakesley Hall, (one of the oldest buildings in Birmingham and is a typical example of Tudor architecture with the use of darkened timber and wattle & daub infill, this is a branch museum of the Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery) & also a visit to Sheldon Hall,

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(early 16th. Century Grade II listed manor house) these former being originally mainly domestic structures.

Lunch at was taken at Sheldon Hall now conveniently converted into a restaurant Other ‘highlights’ of the day were a visit, nay, a pilgrimage, to Steve's birthplace (no blue plaque, but he’s working on it) and to his secondary school (still standing despite the Chemistry Class of ‘68 Great Explosion) before the journey back.

The day held fair and the outing was enjoyed by all.

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
