

Harpole Heritage Group 2007



# CLASP NEWSLETTER



ISSUE 1

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

Local Heritage initiative

**Welcome to this, our first newsletter for CLASP.**

I am delighted by the amount we have managed to cram into this, our first year as CLASP. As well as our ongoing involvement with the excavation at Whitehall Roman Villa, we have carried out trial pits and subsequent excavation of a Saxon Cemetery, trial trenches at a Roman Villa site in Harpole, field walking at Brington and, at time of going to press, a metal detecting survey on the site of the Roman town of Bannaventa.

Another major achievement this year was the production of our leaflet - and our thanks go to Jeremy Cooper for this. It is through our leaflet that we have built up our membership base that is now nearing 100 individual members as well as local historical societies and groups.

Our Local People Local Past project is now entering phase II and the results from Phase I are being added to our website as quickly as time permits and ultimately full details of this will be available on a CD rom.

We have a number of activities planned for 2005 but if you have any suggestions for CLASP, please don't hesitate to let me know.

Finally, I would like to thank all of you for your contribution to making CLASP a success and wish you all a very Happy 2005.

*Kate Weaver : Chairman*



## **Archaeological Exploration of Nine Sites in Northamptonshire**

The initial stage of the Local People: Local Past Romano-British landscape research project financed by the Countryside Agency is very nearly completed. We have investigated all of the potential Romano-British settlements in the parishes of Bugbrooke, Flore, Harpole, Heyford and Weedon which were available for fieldwork. In total nine sites were explored of which seven sites have been systematically fieldwalked and extensive geophysical surveys undertaken. The material retrieved is indicative of the character and development of these settlements through the Roman period. It is now apparent that all of these sites are continuously occupied in the Romano-British period and undergo a surge of development in the late 1<sup>st</sup> to early 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD before evolving into villa estates in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. The results are currently being tabulated and being prepared for publication on the project web site.

### **Countryside Agency may assist**

The success of the work already completed has demonstrated that further research would be extremely rewarding in shaping our understanding of the nature of Romanisation in our local area. Our biggest problem has been the sheer volume of material recovered from the fieldwork and the demands this has placed on our ability to process the material and analyse its meaning in a limited timeframe. However new groups and societies are interested in our work and want to join us and extend the area involved in the survey. The Countryside Agency is also supportive and may provide additional funding to complete a more detailed report on our current research and to underpin the financial costs of opportunities for further fieldwork that have presented themselves.

### **Harlestone Investigations**

CLASP has been given permission to investigate the Roman remains associated with two potential villa sites located in the parish of Harlestone. We were only able to explore one of these sites and during October Little Brington Historical Society and some of our volunteers undertook a fieldwalking survey in tandem with a limited geophysical investigation. However instead of one large settlement, two smaller sites were located and examined. Site 1 produced 1017 sherds distributed across an area of 1 hectare while Site 2 produced 1201 sherds over 1.5 hectares. Initial analysis of the pottery suggests that Site 1 was occupied throughout the Roman period and is part of a much larger settlement that continues to the south east which had been previously identified from aerial photography. The nature of the material recovered is indicative of the development from native farmstead to Roman villa estate established elsewhere in the region.



However Site 2 is possibly more interesting in that it appears the occupation centred on the 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD and that activity had ceased by the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. This is the first settlement whose development and longevity is substantially different from the site progression identified elsewhere. I hope we shall be able to complete more work on these sites and undertake a further survey of another larger villa site next year.



Several volunteers  
being directed by  
Steve Young  
(second from left)  
at the Harpit  
excavation on  
30th August 2004

### **Bannaventa Metal Detecting Survey**

The other opportunity to extend our area of activity is associated with the Roman small town of Bannaventa, Whilton Locks in Norton parish. Although it was too late this year to initiate an extensive programme of fieldwalking, permission was obtained to undertake an organized metal detecting survey. The detecting survey has been planned for December and January and we are working with PAST, a local group of metal detectorists. Our volunteers work with the detectorists to plot the find spot and record the find. So far we have had four days of fieldwork and 93 Roman coins have been recovered of which four are silver denari. One of the denari belongs to the reign of Clodius Albinus, a British based usurper who was beaten in battle by Septimius Severus at Lyon in 197 AD. The majority of the bronze coins appear to be from the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD although there are numerous 4<sup>th</sup> century AD examples. At this point we can only speculate on this phenomena but it could reflect an urban response to the significant development of the landscape already identified with the growth of the villa estate economy of late 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. Apart from the coins the detectorists have also located other finds including a brooch, ring and earring. The importance of a detailed survey of Bannaventa is that it will enable us to understand the relationship between the urban and rural environment and enable us to place our findings in a wider context.

Steve Young : Archaeology Director



## FINDS CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION

After excavation and cleaning, finds such as metal and organic materials need to be assessed to determine the form of conservation treatment that will best protect them from the inevitable alterations in their structure that results from chemical changes caused by their exposure to atmosphere. Where possible, conservation procedures have to be fully reversible to enable further analysis of finds in the future as new techniques evolve in archaeology. From our excavations we have wood to preserve, metal to stabilise, and pottery to re-build and restore: we are doing most of this work ourselves thanks to Steve arranging for me to attend Leicester University for training in conservation.

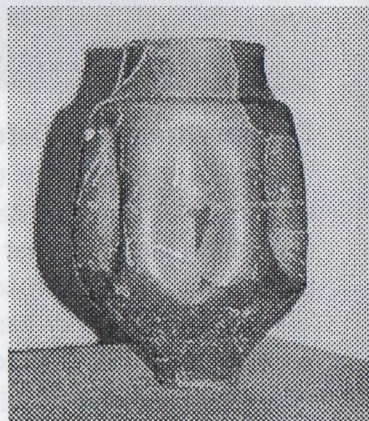
From Whitehall Roman Villa we have recovered a great number of pot sherds and after many hours work our expert pot sticker, Jane McCarthy, has been able to semi-complete a wide selection of pottery types. I have now started work on restoring some of these vessels (filling in the missing bits) and have completed two indented beakers,

a bowl, a jug, and a very fine Samian dish; more vessels have been identified as suitable for restoration and work will continue on these in the New Year.

The Saxon cemetery dig at Whitehall produced some very fine metal artefacts, of these a 48cm spear and personal knife have had conservation treatment and been placed

In a display case so we can show them at talks and exhibitions. After 1700 years or so in the soil iron artefacts tend to be mostly corrosion products, after X-ray to assess metal density and any surface coatings, conservation involves cleaning back the corrosion concretion under a microscope until the original surface is reached, the artefact can then be consolidated and stabilised as necessary.

Those of you who have worked in the bathhouse and lower bathhouse at Whitehall in the past three years will know that a high percentage of the deposits in these areas were pieces of wood of all shapes, sizes and types, the heavier pieces were mainly oak which may have been structural timbers or parts of furniture. We also have a large amount of round wood fragments some of which could have been hurdle fencing.

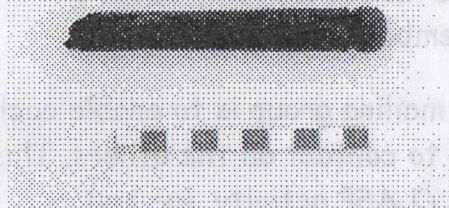


**3rd Century  
Large indented beaker**



Wood is a major storage problem taking up three fridges. Wood only survives well in waterlogged deposits such as our bathhouse and, once wet, it

Turned wooden handle that perhaps at one time had a sponge on one end.



cannot be allowed to dry out as the water is the only thing holding the cell structure together. Wood is made up in part from 70% cellulose, long chain sugar molecules which dissolve after time leaving behind a lignin sponge. We can replace the sugars with Sorbitol or Peg 3000 to give a stable structure but all analysis and dating has to be done before treatment as these preservatives can deplete carbon 14 and block the internal cells that are used to determine species. This work is a priority for 2005.

So far our projects have certainly provided plenty of material for analysis and conservation and I am sure there will be no shortage of exciting finds in the next 12 months.

Martin Weaver : Environmental and Conservation Specialist



#### Daventry Exhibition

In December 2004, thanks to Roy Sharp, we had a small exhibition of our finds at the Council Offices in Daventry.

This was well attended and hopefully will lead to new members joining CLASP.



#### CHECK THE WEBSITE REGULARLY FOR UPDATES

We were hoping to include a diary of events but it was thought more important to advise you of the organisational arrangements.

Updates can always be found in the CLASP members only area of the website at :

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

You will need a password to access it : **northantslandscape**





## CLASP MAILING GROUP

We have set up a Yahoo Group mailing group for CLASP members who have access to email : so far, after two invitations, only about a third of such members have joined it.

The idea of the mailing group is to enable each CLASP member with email to be able to contact all the others. This will be useful for anyone organising a CLASP activity, (or just looking for a lift!) And they will not need to create and maintain an emailing list on their own computer - the Yahoo Group system does it for them.

CLASP members can join and leave the group as and when they choose, alter their email at any time and choose whether to receive individual messages or a single message 'daily digest'. As only CLASP members can join and use the mailing list (their membership has to be approved by the group manager - me!) there is no danger that joining the group will lead to you receiving (more) spam mail.

I have recently altered the way the group works : any member can send a message to the whole group, as before, but when you reply to such a message, it will go only to the person who sent that message and not to the whole group. Also, all mailing group members will now be able to view the archive of messages sent to the whole group by looking at the mailing group web site (address below).

If you would like to join the mailing group - and we do urge you to! - go to the mailing group web site and click on "Join this group" link.

**<http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/claspweb/>**

Jeremy Cooper



### FUTURE NEWSLETTERS ON LINE!

To save printing and postage costs we would like as many Clasp members as possible to download future editions of this newsletter from the CLASP website.

We will send you an email whenever a new edition of the newsletter is available. The newsletter download page will be in the members only area of the website at

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

But you will need a password to access it. The password will be:

**northantslandscape**

We will keep the newsletter file as small as possible to minimise download times. If you would like to help us by getting hold of a copy of the newsletter on-line, please email Kate Weaver to tell her on:

[katemkweaver@aol.com](mailto:katemkweaver@aol.com)

Kate will then cross you off the mailing list. Thanks.....

Jeremy Cooper

### DRAWING AND ARTWORK

CLASP is pleased to have enlisted the services of Helen Hayward to undertake drawing of artefacts. Helen, who has several qualifications in fine art and textile design, has also prepared the initial drawings for the new CLASP logo that is now displayed on our letterhead and website.

### NEW MEMBERS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME

If you know anyone who may be interested in finding out more about everything that is happening in the archaeological world around their local area in Northamptonshire then give them Kate Weaver's or Steve Young's phone number.

For just £5.00 they can contribute to the valuable work of CLASP by providing man/womanpower for one of the projects, attend talks and lectures or just keep up to date with what is happening by receiving this newsletter. For further information see our website at:

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

Or contact Kate Weaver 07703 548662

Or Steve Young 07986 940605





## CLASP MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

CLASP is run by a Committee which includes a representative from each participating group

Chairman :	Kate Weaver
Secretary & Whitehall Roman Villa & Landscape Project Rep :	Dave Hayward
Treasurer :	Angela Evans
Publicity, I.T. and Media :	Jeremy Cooper
Membership Secretary & Weedon Bec History Society Rep.:	Julia Johns
Archaeology Director :	Steve Young

### Society Representatives

Norton Portable Antiquities Search Team : (P.A.S.T.)	Brian Ives
Flore Heritage Society :	Alan Priestley
Brington History Society :	Andrew Shaw
Harpole Heritage Group :	Jennifer Smith
Bugbrooke History Group :	John Curtis

### **STOP PRESS : CAN YOU HELP?**

**There is still time to help with the survey at  
Bannaventa on 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup> January.**

**If you wish to help and haven't already contacted us then  
please contact**

**Kate on 07703 548662 or [katemkweaver@aol.com](mailto:katemkweaver@aol.com)**

This newsletter is produced and distributed by the CLASP Management Committee members . Items for possible inclusion in the next edition should be submitted by email to [katemkweaver@aol.com](mailto:katemkweaver@aol.com) or phone Kate the Chairman on 07703 548662 or Steve Young the Archaeology Director on 07986 940605.  
This first issue was printed in January 2005.