

Website : www.claspweb.org.uk

CLASP

COMMUNITY LANDSCAPE &
ARCHAEOLOGY SURVEY PROJECT

NEWSLETTER



Local Heritage initiative

ISSUE 2

Welcome

Welcome to our 2nd newsletter and a big thank you to all our members for your support - your membership fees make a real difference to the amount of archaeological work CLASP can undertake.

As our previous newsletter went to print we were finishing off stage 1 of the metal detecting survey at Bannaventa: this was our first joint venture with members of Northampton Norton Portable Antiquities Research Team (PAST) and was a great success. In addition to the metal finds, we had enough volunteers to undertake a small area of field walking as well and found some nice pieces of Samian ware and other interesting pottery rims.

Elsewhere in this issue you will find details of further metal detecting and field walking surveys that we plan to carry out in the Autumn when the fields have been harvested. Exact dates can be tricky but do keep an eye on our website and/or contact your CLASP representative for details nearer the time.

A major project this summer is the excavation at Whitehall Farm Roman Villa where I hope to see as many CLASP members as possible making the most of this local dig where volunteers of all abilities are welcome to join in. If you have not signed up yet and would like to help please let me know.

Once again, my thanks to all CLASP members for their support and encouragement.

Kate Weaver
Chair

Wanted

Does anyone have an A2 Scanner or the use of one as we have 200 plans to scan? CLASP also needs a photocopier, do you have one sitting idle somewhere that we could utilise? **PLEASE** contact Kate 07703 548662

An Overview from the Archaeological Director

Work has continued apace with a considerable amount of fieldwalking, geophysical and metal-detecting surveys accomplished over the last six months. Our progress is continuing to validate the methodological approach we have adopted. The surveys undertaken with the Little Brington Historical Society and PAST the metal detecting club are increasing our knowledge of the character and distribution of Roman settlements across a larger area of the River Nene watershed and they are also beginning to confirm the interpretations formed from the analysis of data retrieved from other sites examined previously.

The nearly 300 coins from the first systematic metal detecting survey organised for the Roman site at Bannaventa are still in the process of being identified and analysed. However I have been informed that the range of coins discovered covers all of the Roman period. At least two coins are of the late Iron Age period and the latest Roman issues are of the house of Theodosius, namely Arcadius and Honourius the very last emperors to be represented in all Romano-British coin assemblages. The distribution of these coins will tell us a great deal about the shifting pattern of occupation across the Roman Small Town site, especially in the 3rd and 4th centuries AD. Several brooches were located and these are mainly late 1st to mid 2nd century. Further metal detecting surveys in conjunction with our detectorist collaborators in PAST



Iron age coin found at Bannaventa

will only help to deepen our understanding of the site. The data collected from the coins and fieldwalked pottery will help us to build up a picture of the development of Bannaventa and provide an analytical basis for the extensive geophysical exercise that we hope to undertake in the autumn.

I have also been able to complete a small-scale trial fieldwalking survey of the field immediate to the south of the main scheduled area called Manshead. Although the survey only covered one hectare the 2,000 sherds which were recovered indicated extensive archaeological activity at some distance from the walled town. Analysis of the pottery confirms the general results found elsewhere that there is Iron Age activity in the area and that the first major development of the site happened in the late 1st to mid 2nd century AD. The town increasing in size and importance during the late 2nd and early 3rd century AD before the construction of the walled town or fortified 'burg' of Bannaventa in the 4th century AD. Although the range of finds found in Manshead field supported the existence of a cemetery previously identified in this area the quantity of early material could indicate the extent of a larger town in the earlier Roman period. It is quite possible that we are looking at two periods of town development.

The third major site under investigation this year was one of the potential Roman villa sites in Harlestone parish. A range of features had been noted from aerial reconnaissance in the recent past but these had not been verified by ground survey. Our fieldwalking survey was able to establish that there wasn't one large site but two smaller Romano-British settlements. As previously stated the first site covered about a hectare and produced 1017 sherds and these are now known to be diagnostically datable from 1st to 4th centuries AD. Aerial photography suggests that this site extends towards the east and south and hopefully we shall explore this area later this year. It may well be that this particular site has a similar development to those found in the parishes around Whitehall Farm Nether Heyford. A second settlement covered an

Area of over 1.5 hectares from which 1204 sherds were collected. This site appeared to have mostly pottery of early Roman date and seems to have disappeared by the late 2nd to early 3rd Century AD. Hopefully sufficient funds will be available to complete the geophysical survey of this site as the layout and character of this settlement could highlight features and structures of the earliest phase of Romano-British settlement.

Fieldwork Diary

The potential for fieldwork after this year's harvest and on into the autumn is huge and there will be plenty of opportunities for members of CLASP to become actively involved. Unfortunately the nature of farming and its utter reliance on the weather means that it is very difficult to be precise about the day to day planning of individual surveys but I have tried below to outline some of the sites that we will be working on during the coming months.



Bannaventa (Whilton Locks) Roman Small Town & Landscape

Late August/October

Extensive fieldwalking of the scheduled area after harvest and again after ploughing.

A systematic metal detecting survey probably after ploughing as well as a geophysical survey.



Harlestone 1

September/October

Continued fieldwalking of site, investigating known aerial photographic features further to the east and south.



Harlestone 2

September/November

Completion of the geophysical survey over 2 hectares.



Harlestone 3

Late August/September

A fieldwalking and geophysical survey of a known courtyard villa, which has not been investigated by CLASP.

Towcester

September to December

There are several potential projects but these are still under discussion.

Further details for all these opportunities will be made available on the web site

www.claspweb.org.uk

There will also be several other opportunities including some possibility of trial trenching but these will depend upon our commitments and the volunteer work force available at any one time.

Finally I hope you will be able to join us in one of the most exciting and innovative projects studying Roman Britain in the country today.....and don't forget to watch Time Team on the 6th and 7th July to see what one of our projects has achieved.

Steve Young

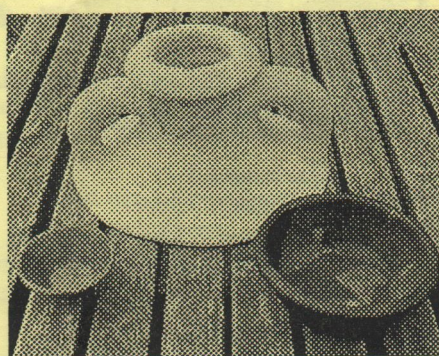
Environmental/Conservation Update

The metal detector survey at Bannaventa produced around 275 coins, all of these have been cleaned and treated where appropriate with renaissance wax to aid analysis and photography. The metal detectorists did a great job, resisting the temptation to rub the coins with their fingers in the usual manner for on the spot identification, this has resulted in some very fine coins most of which are identifiable.

Rubbing a coin fresh out of the ground causes abrasion of the soft bronze corrosion that is usually the only remnant of the coins original surface detail. I would urge all excavators to remember this if coming across a coin during a dig. In the first instance coins should be gently washed in water using a soft brush, they should preferably be bagged with a little water to prevent the corrosion surface drying, the coins are then cleaned under a microscope using a cocktail stick to carefully ease off corrosion products where these mask the detail, and then dried.

Also of interest from the Bannaventa survey were bronze mould run offs the size of which could indicate the manufacture of small items such as brooches, figurines etc.

I have now completed the restoration of three pottery vessels from Harpole we have a greyware bowl, a Samien 33 cup, and an amphora which is a partial rebuild to just below the handles, amphora dimensions varied greatly and we only have body curvature information to this point from the surviving sherds.



Three restored vessels from Harpole

The Whitehall wood has been receiving attention and I have taken samples from larger pieces for identification, the samples examined so far have been mainly Oak (*Quercus*) and some Ash (*Fraxinus Excelsior*). Steve has had some of the larger pieces looked at by Sheffield University, but unfortunately dendro-dating using tree ring information could not be carried out due to the lengthways cut of the wood.

One of the most important wooden artifacts from Whitehall is the turned handle which you have possibly seen at our exhibitions floating in water to keep it from collapsing. This has now been successfully treated with Sorbitol, and despite some anxious moments during drying, the handle only shrank by 2mm in length and with no distortion, which is exceptional. Careful use of Sorbitol leaves wood looking like wood after treatment, and two wood experts have visually identified it as Ash. We will not positively identify it under the microscope as this would entail cutting a section from it across the grain for analysis.

Dr. Martin Weaver
Environmental and Conservation Specialist.

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED!

Whitehall Farm Roman Villa and Landscape Project

The annual excavation at Whitehall Farm, Nether Heyford will run for 4 weeks. Activities will commence at 9.00am and finish at 5.00pm from Monday to Friday starting Monday 27th June and finishing Friday 22nd July.

Contact Kate Weaver 07703 548662 or register your interest via the website :

www.claspweb.org.uk

For CLASP members who are unable to work on the excavation at Whitehall we have arranged for a tour of the site on Monday evening 25th July at 7.00pm To book a place phone Kate Weaver (number above)

Tuesday Afternoons Free?

From September until the end of June, volunteers meet at Whitehall Farm, Nether Heyford to process finds from excavations and field walking. Primarily the finds are from **Whitehall Roman Villa** but there are also finds to process from other sites.

The **CLASP** repository at Whitehall has been extended and volunteers to whitewash the wall and paint the new door would be very welcome.

Wednesday Afternoons Free?

Harpole Heritage Group have just completed sorting, counting, weighing, recording and boxing the many finds from 'Harpole Two'. We usually meet up on Wednesday afternoons at 1.30pm at the repository, Whitehall House Storage Buildings, Stowe Hill. We shall start again in September.

If you would like to help contact Jennifer Smith, 30 Sandy Lane, Kislingbury 01604 831294

Bugbrooke History Group

Two meetings have been arranged to be held at the Community Centre Bugbrooke: July 13th : Stan Clark will be talking about medieval fishing weights and reflect on the significance in the local economy.

September 28th : people are invited to bring in photos of Bugbrooke people and places to share an oral history evening.

More details, times etc from Alan Kent 01604 830518

Photos Required: Jennifer Smith would like any photos you have of your group's activities i.e field walking, metal detecting etc. for use in displays. If you have anything to offer her please ring her phone number above or bring them to the next CLASP Committee Meeting Monday 11th July 5.00pm at Whitehall excavation site.

Towards Charitable Status

The Special General Meeting on 14th March voted in the new constitution (much less trouble than the European one!) and elected the first set of CLASP TRUSTEES. The Trustees now oversee all CLASP matters and have final responsibility in law for ensuring that CLASP sticks to its aims and observes due financial probity. The Trustees (sitting as the CLASP Executive Committee) appoint and set rules for the CLASP Organising Committee, which is just the old CLASP Management Committee by another name: it includes Trustees (two must be present at all meetings - one of them must be the CLASP Treasurer), members representing the organisations that participate in CLASP, representatives of the individual members of CLASP and the co-opted members.

In addition to shouldering legal responsibility, the Trustees will take on strategic CLASP business - like long term fund raising and the leasing of property. The Organising Committee's job is to deal with the promotional and organisational nitty gritty of CLASP's activities in the field and post-excavation.

The new CLASP constitution follows closely the Charities Commission model constitution for an unincorporated association (i.e an association which is not a limited company) and we hope that it will enable CLASP to obtain registered charitable status later this year. That will put CLASP in a much better position to seek and receive major funding.

The TRUSTEES ARE:



Chair
Secretary of Trustees
Treasurer

Alan Standish
Jeremy Calderwood
Angela Evans

Alan Priestley
David Banner
Alan Watson
Steve Young

CLASP ORGANISING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

There have already been some changes in the Clasp Committee:

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

Representatives

Individual Representative	:	Gillian Biddle
Norton Portable Antiquities Search Team	:	Brian Ives
Flore Heritage Society	:	Alan Priestley
Brington History Society	:	Andrew Shaw
Harpole Heritage Group	:	Jennifer Smith
Bugbrooke History Group	:	Alan Kent
Towcester & District Local History Society	:	Martin Winterton

Notes from the Secretary of the Organising Committee: Dave Hayward

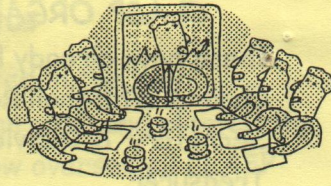
On the Secretarial front things have been busy lately with the preparation and publication of the résumé of Technical Work in Progress being undertaken by CLASP. This is a comprehensive situation report of where all the CLASP projects are at anytime, it is available for all to see on the CLASP website www.claspweb.org.uk.

Personally I have changed my allegiances on the Organising Committee from representing the Whitehall project to being an Individual Members' representative, the other one being Gillian Biddle. It is our duty to ensure the interests of the individual membership are looked after.

For CLASP to succeed there must be proactive involvement from participating organisations and individual members. Your Committee is always prepared to receive suggestions for Minor Project research to be undertaken by individuals, small informal groups or participating organisations by themselves or with other societies. Co-ordinating support will be available from the Committee to organise these projects. If you have an idea for a possible project let me have the details and a Project Definition will be prepared.

CLASP AGM & PUBLIC OPEN MEETING

Please make a note in your diary of **Wednesday 21st September** when the CLASP Annual General Meeting will be held in Bugbrooke Community Centre at 7.00pm.



The Public Open Meeting will follow at 7.30pm with a panel of three speakers to include Roy Friendship-Taylor from the Upper Nene Archaeological Society, Dr Richard Jones from the Whittlewood Project, and our own Archaeological Director Steve Young with Myk Flitcroft the County Council Heritage Officer moderating proceedings. The series of talks will be followed after a short refreshment break by a 'Brains Trust' panel.

Come along not only to support CLASP but to enjoy what will be a very informative evening.

Membership Renewals are due September 2005



CLASP cannot exist without your membership. Please remember to renew yours in September - the website Member's password will also be changing. If you joined after February 2005 you will not need to pay any more funds until September 2006 (however if you wish to give a donation to Clasp it would be appreciated!) Encourage your friends to join too!

Contact the Membership Secretary Julia Johns 01327 341729
7 Eton Close, Weedon Bec, Northants, NN7 4PJ

The CLASP Organising Committee wish to express their thanks to Dr Martin Weaver for his sponsorship and patronage of this second issue of the CLASP newsletter.

This newsletter is produced and distributed by the CLASP Organising Committee members. Items for possible inclusion in the next edition should be submitted by email to jane@pigyard.com or phone Jane McCarthy the Editor on 01604 830321 or Kate the Chairman on 07703 548662.
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