



# CLASP

## Community Landscape & Archæology Survey Project NEWSLETTER



Local Heritage initiative



ROMAN RESEARCH TRUST

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

Spring 2021, issue 32

Charity No 1111667

### From Rob Close, Chairman of Trustees and of the Organising Committee

I became a Trustee at the December 2021 Special General Manager and agreed to take on the formal Chairmanship. I have attended the Trustees meetings as a non-voting member in my capacity as Chair of the Organising Committee for about 5 years. I was willing to take on the Chairmanship because I felt my business experience would be very useful in thinking about the practicality of our various options about our future home and in helping to manage our restricted financial resources.

**Premises:** We were exploring purchasing a portacabin and locating this at the Youth Club in Nether Heyford. However, this is not going to happen because of matters arising out of the planning application. **The potentially good news though is that the likely purchaser of new Creation Farm wants us to remain as tenants.** This would be excellent assuming we can negotiate an acceptable rent and tenure. In reserve we have the possibility of purchasing a portacabin and locating this at Bradwell Abbey, a Heritage Site in Milton Keynes. The disadvantage would be the distance from where we are now. We also have the possibility of moving some of the artefacts to the County Archive in Irchester. Trustees will be visiting the County Archive in the next few months.

**Finances:** Whilst we have substantive funds in our bank account, about a third of this has been given to us for specific purposes and a third has been

*cont page 2*

put to one side by the Trustees to cover potential future liabilities. The remainder could go towards the purchase of a Portacabin and removal costs, should this be necessary. Membership fees and related donations cover Insurance, affiliation fees and normal running costs. The 100 Club has been renewed for a second year and this covers about half the cost of the rent for the Field Centre. **Please support this.** The cost of toilets and diggers for Excavations is a substantive extra expense, only partly covered by the charge made for attending digs. Given all of these, fund raising is a priority for the Trustees.

**Fieldwork:** Two excavations are proposed for 2021, COVID restrictions allowing, at Bannaventa and the Anglo-Saxon cemetery. The Organising Committee will meet by Zoom in mid-May to discuss these. One new aspect will be the launch of CLASP's Passport scheme, which will enable all of us who want to achieve accreditation in due course for all the core archaeological skills.

**Dave Hayward:** Dave has been very active in the management of CLASP since its beginning. Until the fourth quarter of last year he was Chairman of Trustees and immediately before that Chairman of the Organising Committee. His contribution to CLASP including in fund raising has been tremendous. He remains a member of CLASP and we hope to see him at the digs but thought it appropriate to say, **"Thank you very much Dave"**.

**New Trustees:** we are fortunate to have five new Trustees. As some will not be known to Members, and even long-standing Trustees may not be known to new Members, we have provided a short note from each - introducing themselves and saying why they were willing to become Trustees.

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## Current Trustees

### **Chairman: Rob Close**

I was working in New York until retirement in 2010. On return to Barby my wife Christine and I volunteered for the Barby Hill Project initiated by Gren Hatton. A small team, under the instruction of Fred Kay, carried out geophysical surveys over 16 Hectares. We also had two excavations. Gren persuaded me to represent Barby on the CLASP Organising Committee.

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**We need please to find someone to take this role on.** My current CLASP roles also include acting as Fred's deputy for Geophysics and maintaining a secure data archive.

### **Archaeological Director: Steve Young**

I am a retired Senior Lecturer of archaeology from the University of Northampton. I directed the excavations for the Whitehall Farm villa research project between 1999 – 2013 and was involved in founding the charity. I have been the archaeological Director and a Trustee for CLASP since its inception. I have been active in archaeology since the mid-seventies, notably in the early years with the York Archaeological Trust, and in the early eighties with The National Trust. My particular interest is in Roman landscape characterisation.

### **Treasurer: Angela Evans**

Whilst at school I trained for shorthand/typing but hated it. Give me maths, history and English and I was happy. When I left school I trained as a comptometer (calculating machine) operator. After marriage we moved to Southampton for a while and one job was to work on board ship - that was different. After the birth of my girls and them starting school I went back to work and worked in VAT for a while then went back to 'comping'. Computers then came in and I adapted and continued working in Accounts Depts in various roles until I retired. I hadn't been retired for more than a month when because Colin was involved in local Archaeology I was approached by a member of CLASP asking me to take over the accounts. This was just a building society pass book and a pile of invoices and some receipts and grant papers. A good job I liked numbers!!! But as I liked accounts and history it combined two of my interests so I accepted. Once we became a charity I agreed to become Trustee and thus I was engaged in my longest role of unpaid employment!!

### **Jim Aveling**

My wife and I joined members of Blisworth Heritage Society at a small dig in Gayton at the invitation of CLASP in 2007. We have been members of CLASP ever since and I have represented Blisworth on the Organizing Committee since then. I have been secretary of the Committee from 2014 and a Trustee for about three years. What I enjoy are the digs and geophysical exploration where a great deal of knowledge is discovered. CLASP has had fruitful dealings with MOLA in an excavation on the Flore Bypass and a

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large geophysical survey of Borough Hill. What have I brought to CLASP? Well, I keep on turning up and doing my best.

### **Nicola Bacchus**

Nicola joined CLASP hoping to support community projects by bringing her commercial skills to help CLASP with their fund raising. Having been completely unaware of the rich heritage that Northampton has beneath its landscape getting involved also offers Nicola the chance to spread the word and get more people across Northampton involved. Nicola has over 20 years' experience in financial services and primarily employee benefits. Nicola is versatile, commercially aware and loves creating strategies and plans to make things happen. She has worked for brands such as Standard Life, Royal Bank of Scotland and Worldpay. Nicola hopes that her understanding of Corporates and their often-stated desire to benefit the community will, with encouragement, result in them enthusing about CLASP's projects.

### **Steve Bacon**

Hi, my name is Steve Bacon and this is my second year of CLASP membership. I am a retired primary school teacher retiring at Christmas 2018 and have always been interested in history. Indeed in my last post I had responsibility for the development of teaching history in the school. In this 2018 role and to mark the centenary of the end of WW1 I instigated a project with the children on tracing the people listed on the local war memorial. The purpose of this project was to bring a context and purpose to the teaching of the process and methods of historical research and to extend the children's questioning skills. I was able to coordinate with local groups including the archive service and was lucky enough to be able to take a group to the archives in order to further extend their understanding of how evidence can be used to answer questions and develop historical understanding. Throughout my career I strived to develop effective questioning and research skills in children. I took a career break in 2000 to set up my own historical interpretation company specifically to further this interest which allowed me to interact with children across the age range from nursery to GCSE level. In my last two years in service and on the recommendation of my Headteacher I was invited to organise training days on effective history teaching for student teachers within Northampton. On retirement I was able to develop my interest in archaeology further by Joining CLASP. As a trustee I will be very interested in exploring ways of involving young people and the wider Community in the activities of CLASP.

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### **Rosemary Daniel**

I have been a member of CLASP for about 3 years and participated in one of the digs in 2019 as well as helping with some pot washing. History has always been one of my interests and in this area there is so much around us. I was attracted to CLASP because, although a community group it had carried out digs to a professional standard and because it was interested in making the most of its members in terms of involvement and helping them to learn new skills. My background is largely in HR together with learning and development so this is the knowledge and skills that I can bring to CLASP. I am particularly interested in making the Skills Passport available to members and in developing the website to make it an information resource.

### **Norman Garnett**

I have been a member of CLASP for around 15 years joining shortly after retiring from work as a Risk Control Engineer for various American industrial insurance companies. I take an active part in the CLASP survey programme wherever possible and have a particular interest in the site survey procedures, photography of finds and the use of photogrammetry on site. My recent involvements have been in fund-raising, researching possible alternative locations for a CLASP field office and applying for planning permission for the proposed new field office now, hopefully, no longer a requirement.

### **Marcus Lewis**

I came to live at Lower Thrupp Grounds Farm, Norton in 1938, aged 2 weeks and farmed there until 1992 when I retired. I then followed my second passion and took up landscape gardening. In 1956/7 I helped two amateur archaeologists from Northampton in their excavation of a refuse tip on Bannaventa and also attended a medieval excavation at Wolfhamcote near Braunston. When I moved into Norton village in 1976 I was appointed to the Norton Church and Town Estate charity and am still a Trustee. I first joined CLASP in 2005 at the dig at Man's Head Plantation. Since retirement I have more time to get involved in the local archaeology. I have nearly completed a history of Norton parish and its environs.

### **Salma Pervez**

I work within the IT and Cyber Security industry. Outside of this I have a keen interest in local archaeology, and this has been one of the main reasons I joined CLASP. I am a CLASP Trustee where I have also helped with arranging remote memorial lectures, having to adapt due to the COVID pandemic.

## From Steve Young, Archaeological Director

A new innovation for CLASP during this ongoing pandemic period is the planned delivery of a Spring Time and early Summer programme of Memorial Lectures on Zoom dedicated to past members and volunteers whose contribution to CLASP was not only extremely helpful but was also worthy of public acknowledgement. One can register to attend these zoom talks on the website and the lectures will also be recorded for those who would rather watch a video later on line. More information on the range of lectures and the people remembered is available on the website and on our Facebook page.

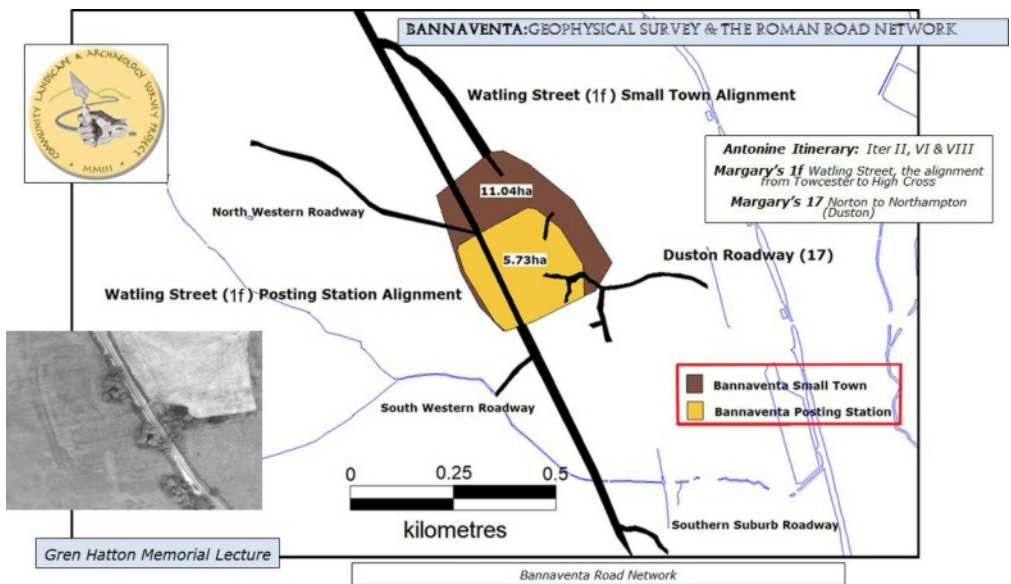
The first of these talks was given by me in early April and was concerned with what could be concluded about the Roman Road Network at Bannaventa from the extensive geophysical survey undertaken by CLASP members between 2011- 2017. This is pre the publication of an article in *Itineria*, a new journal dedicated to the study of all things related to Roman Roads.

([www.romanroads.org/itinera.html](http://www.romanroads.org/itinera.html)). The lecture enabled me to focus upon the nature of the Posting Station and Small-Town road network by investigating the road hierarchy, alignments, constructional detail and context of the settlement they serve. It also offered the opportunity to explore the broader social, economic and political narrative of Bannaventa in relation to Roman Britain.

As we know, Watling Street constitutes one of the most significant arterial transport routes in Roman Britain and Bannaventa is one of the chief settlements associated with the route which is almost uniquely open and accessible for archaeological enquiry. The relationship between carriageway, posting station and the local road network offered an opportunity to clarify the purpose and function not only of the site itself but also the nature of the link with the locality.

The extent and scale of the site was examined and the existence of a larger small town beneath the posting station established. The similarity of small-town layout with neighbouring roadside settlements at Towcester (Lactodurum) & Fenny Compton (Magiovinum) was discussed as were the origins of

these places in the Late Iron Age / Early Conquest transition period. An absence of early military structural influence and the lack of public buildings and irregular internal street plan were noted, as was the existence of considerable extra mural areas outside the defended area and the development a large late Roman suburb to the south of the Posting Station.



### Bannaventa Roman Road Network

A putative Site Chronology for Bannaventa was hypothesised, beginning with the Pre-existing occupation focused at the site before the conquest with the construction of the main Watling Street alignment to the SW of this settlement in the immediate post conquest period.

The creation of small-town boundary in late 1st to mid-2nd century AD joined these two disparate areas together into a single entity for the first time, only later to change in purpose with the development of a Posting Station defensive area in late 3rd to 4th century AD to reflect the changing priorities in central government of the latter empire.

I was able to identify four types of Road across the broader hierarchy of routeways. These stretched from the provincial arterial highway of Watling Street through to the slightly less important regional carriageways which linked Bannaventa to the markets and more important communities of the wider region. I looked at local non-centric thoroughfares and trackways which serviced the focal point of Bannaventa but did not start or finish there but in the surrounding hinterland and finally the interior lanes of the Post Station related to the layout of the defended built environment.

The lecture addressed constructional details where these could be observed and any characteristics associated with the layout and dimensions of the roads and associated ditches either for drainage or signifying the limit or boundary

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of road zones. There were various discussion points including the degradation of the site through agricultural long-term practice and development. The probable existence of an underlying earlier field system could reflect Late Iron Age pre-conquest agricultural activity before the founding of the small town and posting station. The fact there was no evidence of a military foundation for any element of the site, the presence of an asymmetrical plan for the posting station and the development of the late southern suburb as a replacement for the small-town element of Bannaventa. I also explored the evolving role of the site and the morphology of Bannaventa and the changing perceptions of the late Roman period. Finally, I looked at the potential importance of Bannaventa in understanding the late Roman system of defended enclosures associated with the neighbouring 'Posting Stations' to the north at Tripontium (Caves Inn), Manduessedum (Mancetter), Letocetum (Wall) and Pennorucium (Penkrudge).

If you would like to know more, please feel free to avail yourself of the video at <https://vimeo.com/showcase/8379270>.

Two opportunities for exploratory archaeological field work have been undertaken during the late Spring: a small-scale fieldwalking exercise at Whitehall Farm, Nether Heyford, Northamptonshire and an exploratory geophysical survey near Cold Higham, Northamptonshire. Both of these were related to field trials of a new hand-held GPS surveying device developed by Don Attwell, one of our volunteers, who is well versed in electronics and computer applications. It is designed to be accurate to within a metre as opposed to the three to five metres which is the situation with currently available commercial models. The rationale for the machine is to enable CLASP to record the location of artifacts, archaeological features and survey grids with increased accuracy in a very straightforward and unskilled way without having to resort to trilateration or more accurately a theodolite and automatic level.

It provides the opportunity for greater clarity when analysing field walking assemblages by removing the need to layout grid squares and enabling individual findings spots to be recorded rather than being ascribed a given square area which understandably is less precise. It will also enhance our ability to locate survey grid coordinates in the field without the use of a theodolite which, although extremely accurate, requires a level of skill and experience which isn't always widely and readily available amongst community archaeologists. Again, in excavation it is a quick and simple way of recording fea-

*cont page 9*



ture, contexts and spot heights or levels. Utilization of the device is easily communicated to anybody using it and any data is electronically recorded for downloading onto a computer without a need to transcribe any information.

At Whitehall Farm the device was field trialled on an area to the north of the Roman villa where metal detectorists had located a considerable spread of coins from the Roman period. The area had also been partially subjected to geophysical survey but had previously not revealed much archaeological material. An area of about a hectare was field walked and 51 targets were recovered. Amongst these were 31 sherds of Roman pottery, 10 worked flints, 8 tile fragments including calcite shelly boxflue and oxidised tegula tile plus a substantial piece of slag, possibly part of a bloom from an iron working furnace.

The Roman pottery contained mostly very abraded sherds and would normally be interpreted as a manuring scatter rather than implying significant inhabitation. Several fabrics were present in the collection with a majority of the sherds being greyware, although soft pink grog and early grog fabrics were also present in the assemblage. Amongst the forms were agrogged wide



Whitehall Farm Geophysical Survey & GPS Field Trial Area

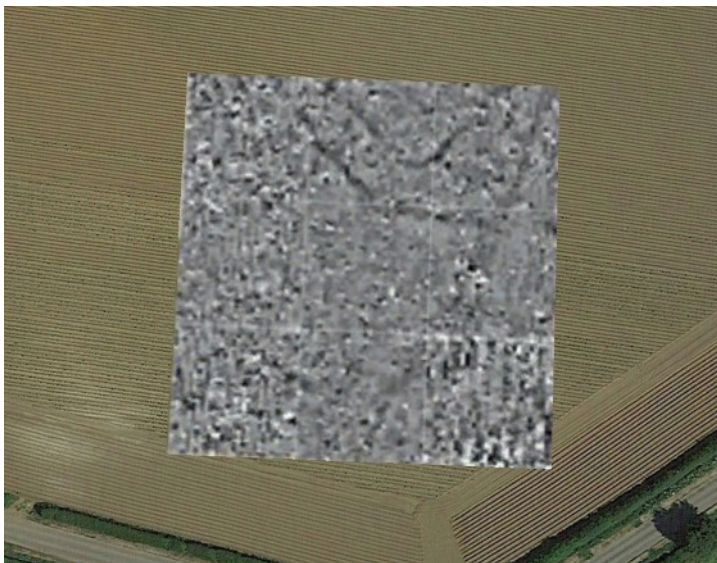
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mouth bowl and channel rim jar, Mancetter/Hartshill mortarium and a greyware flanged bowl. The date range represented the detritus of vessels from the 1st to 4th century AD. The flint included 1 arrowhead, 2 thumbnail scrapers, 3 blades whilst the rest were discarded flakes. All the material as well as the Roman coin spread in conjunction with the anomalies observed in the limited geophysical survey suggest ongoing activity in the area but not that this was necessarily domestic in nature.

However, at Cold Higham the GPS device was tested to record the position of an exploratory geophysical grid covering an area of 0.9 hectares. The geophysical fieldwork was undertaken to detect whether there were any archaeological anomalies present in a field that might be associated with a material assemblage, retrieved through field walking and metal detecting and carried out in the area under the aegis of Ian Peterson and Dave Derby. This included worked flints, pottery sherds and coins. Elements of a substantial area of enclosures were observed and it is hoped that CLASP will be able to return next year to complete a far larger and more complete geophysical survey to help enhance our understanding of the site.

#### **Field Centre and future activities**

CLASP has also been the recipient of good news in regard to the Field Centre and the possibility that we may well, after all the angst of the last year, be able to stay at our current location once the purchase of the premises has been completed and the new owners take control of the site. I have personally talked to two of the directors of the company involved and they have assured



Cold Higham  
Exploratory  
Geophysical Survey

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me that they would like us to stay in residence and we will have further discussions with them in due course. In addition, for all you volunteers out there with itchy trowel syndrome CLASP will try to do all it can to organise two archaeological excavations for August and September of this year. One will continue of the excavation of the Post Roman and Early Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Whitehall Farm and the other will look at features which may be associated with the extra mural area of Bannaventa. The order and exact timing of either excavation are yet to be decided in detail but should they go ahead, will be in August and September.

I would like to thank you all for your continued support and enthusiasm and let us hope we will be back to some sort of normality in the very near future. There is much to be done and an even greater need for us to do it.

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**Deadline for the Autumn 2021 Newsletter will provisionally be Sunday, 12 September, 2021. All photos please 300 dpi and separate from the text with indications of their positions.**

**Editor: Tony Johns T: 01327 341729, E: [tony@tonyjohs.co.uk](mailto:tony@tonyjohs.co.uk)**

## **A History of Northamptonshire Archaeology, written by Andy Chapman, Secretary of the Northants Archaeology Society**

In 2015, while marking the 40th anniversary of NAS with an overview of archaeology in Northamptonshire (NA volume 38, the one with the red cover); I also provided ‘A short history of Northamptonshire Archaeology’, the field team half of what had begun as the Northamptonshire Archaeological Unit within Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) in the 1970s.

I won’t repeat it all here, but we should mark the passing of Northamptonshire County Council and its archaeological and heritage service at the end of March. It will be replaced by two half counties, West Northamptonshire and North Northamptonshire, and below we will note the impact this will have on the little that is left of a once much larger and more influential voice in the archaeology of the county.

There may be some out there who might say good riddance to the NCC, but you should be wary of doing so until you have seen the effectiveness of the replace-

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ments and what really happens behind the glossy launch advertising that has recently been coming through our letterboxes and onto social media platforms.

The appearance of a County Archaeologist in the NCC goes back to Paul

Everson in 1973, and this period saw the formation of the Sites and Monuments Record, with sites plotted and numbered on paper base maps, which were the access to the more detailed paper records. After Paul moved on, Alan Hannan was appointed to the role in August 1976, and he oversaw steady growth of the archaeological unit, which continued to the 1990s. The first major excavation was at Raunds, Furnells Manor, followed by Ashton Roman town and the Raunds Area Project, after that there are too many to list.

Through the early years the team was based at County Hall, Northampton, and as it grew the team occupied assorted rooms scattered around the building and nearby buildings. In 1988 the unit was relocated to Wootton Hall Park, Mereway, (bringing an end to complaints about mud on the stairs), and finally acquired a yard for storage of equipment, a dedicated pot washing room and a finds store with shelving, with the original darkroom later converted to a sample processing room, as photography went digital.

In 1990, the advent of commercial archaeology led to the creation of a 'Chinese wall' between the curatorial archaeologists who determined what needed to be done and who maintained and enhanced the now digital Sites and Monuments/Historic Environment Record; and the field team, who did the fieldwork (if they won the job), but initially still with Alan Hannan as County Archaeologist over both sections.

Staffing levels in the curatorial section were already coming under pressure in the early 1990s, as County Council funding itself was under greater pressure. After Alan Hannan retired in 1995 it was all downhill as the number of curatorial posts was gradually whittled away. The status of the subsequent heads of the curatorial section was also steadily diminished. Whereas Alan Hannan could speak and mix on an equal footing with the heads of departments who made important planning and policy decisions, subsequent curatorial heads operated at ever lower levels of the council food chain.

As NCC made itself into an enabler, rather than a doer, the field team also came under pressure, kept at bay only by feeding an annual profit into NCC coffers. But following the recession of 2008, with many archaeologists around the country losing their jobs through 2009, the writing was on the wall, and in Jan-

uary 2014 the field team was finally made external to become MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) Northampton, with MOLA themselves having become external from the Museum of London.

At that point what was left was the Historic Environment Record (what began in the 1970s as the Sites and Monuments Record), now within the Record Office; the archaeological planner advisors, within the planning department; and the potential of developing Chester Farm into a Heritage Centre including a much-needed archive store, now the Archaeological Resource Centre (ARC).

So, what happens to these much-diminished roles within the new county structure?

The Archaeological Planning Advisors stay within the Minerals & Waste Planning Services team and become part of North Northamptonshire Council, while providing advice to West Northamptonshire through a Service Level Agreement.

The Historic Environment Record stays with the Record Office within West Northamptonshire Council, which also includes Northampton, as the borough authority also becoming extinct.

Chester Farm, now glossily rebranded as Chester House, including the ARC (Archaeological Resource Centre), will be part of North Northamptonshire Council and we look forward to the imminent opening of the ARC and must hope that the plans for the rest of Chester House are economically viable and sustainable in the long term.

So, we now wait to see what the next chapter of public service archaeology in

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## **Field walking finds logger (FWFL)**

My name is Don Attwell and I have been involved with CLASP by osmosis for a while now to help with the IT ie, adding PCs to the centre, building a

database, producing site 3D graphics, drone images of sites for overlay onto maps and now a way of logging more accurately anything found on a field walk. I have developed a logging device that logs the latitude, longitude, altitude, and items found. This involved designing the device, programming it, and installing it in a purpose made 3D printed box.

It had to be easy to use in the field without having to type the finds names and find number. This was achieved with 3 switches with a blue LED indicating which switch is on; the different combinations of switches give you 8 different find types.

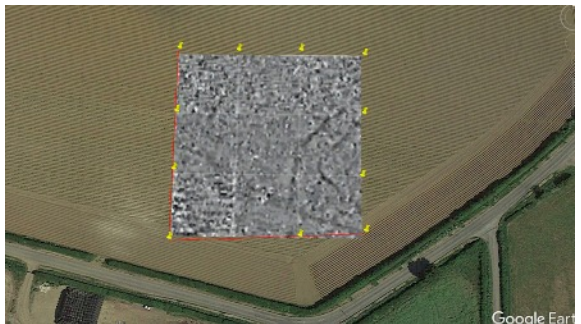
q q q = 0 = Basic sherd, qq q = 1 = Super sherd, q q q = 2 = Tile, q q q = 3 = Small find, q q q = 4 = Coin, q q q = 5 = Flint, q q q = 6 = Slag, q q q = 7 = Control point

After the find is selected and the save button is pressed it indicates on the screen what the find is and the number ie (27 Small find) the number can then be written on the find bag, at the same time the item details are stored on a SD card for later processing in QGIS.

We have done a field test at Cold Higham and found it to be more accurate than a mobile phone - 1-2m on this device and 5-7m on a mobile phone. This of course is nowhere near as accurate as an RTK system that the pros use (1cm accuracy) but there again you are talking about thousands of pounds for this set up.



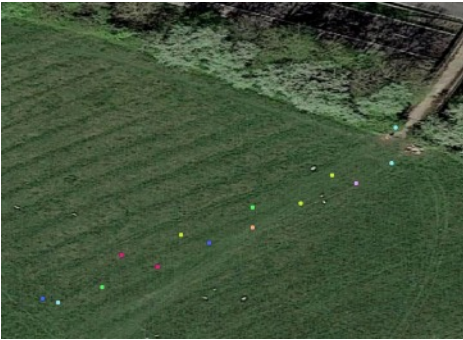
GPS-Logger



90 x 90

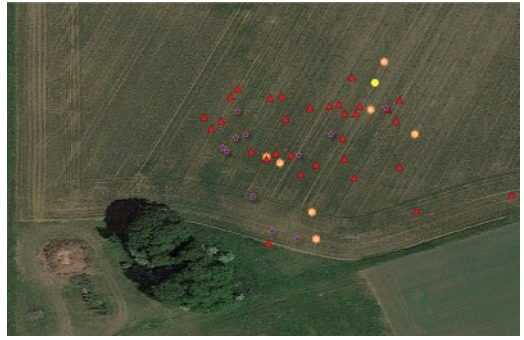
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GPS Tracker Test

Symbol	Value	Legend
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ●	1	Super Sherd
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ●	2	Tile
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ●	3	Small Find
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ●	4	Brooch
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ●	5	Coin
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ●	6	Buckle
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ●	7	Slag



Whitehall Farm Test

NHYD02 fw LOG 2021		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Basic sherd
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Tile
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Flint
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Slag
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Google Sat

## List of Contacts for CLASP Associations

Organisation	Contact	Tel
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