



CLASP

Community Landscape & Archæology Survey Project NEWSLETTER



Local Heritage initiative



ROMAN RESEARCH TRUST

Website: www.claspweb.org.uk

Charity No 1111667

Autumn 2021, issue

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

Chairman's Comments

Papers for the AGM report were issued on 5th October to give proper advance notice of the AGM on 20th October. Normally the advance notice is submitted in the Autumn Newsletter, but a decision was taken to delay the Newsletter to give time for Steve Young to include a write-up of the successful Anglo-Saxon Cemetery dig only completed on 29th September.

Extracts from the Annual Report (the Agenda for the AGM, Summary Financials and the Motion relating to 16 and 17 year-olds) are included at the back of this Newsletter. My Chairman's Report is set out below for convenience. I hope to see many of you at the AGM.

Chairman's Report in the AGM papers

Having been forced by COVID lockdown restrictions to hold the 2020 AGM by Zoom, it is great to be able to return to a physical meeting at Harpole Bowling Club. I, as Chair of the Organising Committee, stepped in to Chair the 2020 AGM because of the resignation of Dave Hayward as Chair of Trustees after many years of leadership. At the December 2020 SGM I became a Trustee and was appointed Chairman. I was willing to take this on because we have a strong set of Trustees. The Trustees will have met seven times since the AGM.

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During lockdown, the number of group activities have of course been limited. On a virtual basis, Trustee Salma Pervez oversaw some quite diverse lectures delivered over Zoom and these were well attended. In terms of physical get togethers the Trustees visited Northants' Archaeological Resource Centre whilst the Geophysics team has surveyed Thrupp, Cold Higham and Manshead. The September dig at the Anglo-Saxon Cemetery though represented a first return to normality.

I think the dig was a great success. We had a strong turnout, both of regular attendees and of new members. The weather was generally kind and we excavated five bodies. Everyone seemed to enjoy it and there was a great team attitude. Thank you to all those that made it possible.

For the dig we implemented a requirement that all attendees had to be Members, all had to pre-book and those attending on one day paid £10 and those attending for multiple days paid £20. With this arrangement, the funds raised covered the costs such as the portaloos and digger.

Making sure that we do not have a deficit from the dig is essential now that CLASP has the current £2000 cost of the rent for the Field Centre. The 100 Club provides a good contribution towards the cost of the Field Centre, but we need more Members! As we get back to normality, we will look to hosting events to generate additional funds.

The future of the Field Centre remains uncertain. The farm had been provisionally sold to a buyer that was keen for us to stay. However, this sale fell through, leading to the farm going back on the market. The best outcome for us would be for the new buyer to say we can stay at the current rent. Should this not happen, we will have three-month's notice to move. Our fallback would be to move all (or some) of our artefacts to Northants' Archaeological Resource Centre at Chester Farm, Irchester. Our negotiations with the current owners of the farm resulted in them giving us sufficient funds to cover the cost of this.

I am happy to be Chair of Trustees in these challenging times, but I am not comfortable with also Chairing the Organising Committee. A volunteer to take on this role would be much appreciated.

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**Community
Landscape
Archaeology
Survey
Project**

Calling Notice for the CLASP 2021 Annual General Meeting.

The meeting will be held on at 1900 on Wednesday, October 20th at Harpole Bowling Club.

The AGM will be followed by a short break and then a presentation by Steve Young, CLASP Archaeology Director on the 2021 Fieldwork including the September 2021 Excavation at the Anglo-Saxon Cemetery plus various Geophysics surveys.

(If anyone is isolating and can attend by Zoom, please let us know and we can investigate the practicality of providing this capability).

Agenda for the AGM.

1. Welcome by the Chairman and noting of any Apologies.
 2. Agreement of the Minutes of the AGM held on 21/10/2020 and the SGM held on 14/12/2020.
 3. Chairman's Report.
 4. Presentation of the 2020/21 financial Accounts for Acceptance.
 5. Motion to allow 16 and 17 year-olds to become members of CLASP.
 6. Re-election of Trustees
 7. AOB
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CLASP 2021 AGM Item 5: Motion to extend membership to 16 & 17 year-olds.

Younger persons tend not to participate in CLASP activities. We would hope that over time we can broaden our active membership as part of protecting the future of CLASP. However, participation in any CLASP activity requires that the participant be a member, to be covered by CLASP's insurance policy.

The Trustees propose that we reduce our membership age to 16 on the following basis:

- 1. In line with CLASP's safeguarding policy the 16 & 17 year olds would still need to be accompanied by a parent or guardian.**
- 2. The parent or guardian would need to be a CLASP member in his/her own right.**
- 3. The 16 or 17 year olds would pay a membership fee of half that paid by a normal member**

Members at the 2021 AGM are asked to agree to this membership change.

Deadline for the Spring 2022 Newsletter will provisionally be Sunday, 13 March, 2022. All photos please 300 dpi and separate from the text with indications of their positions.

Editor: Tony Johns T: 01327 341729, E: tony@tonyjohns.co.uk

From Steve Young, Archaeological Director

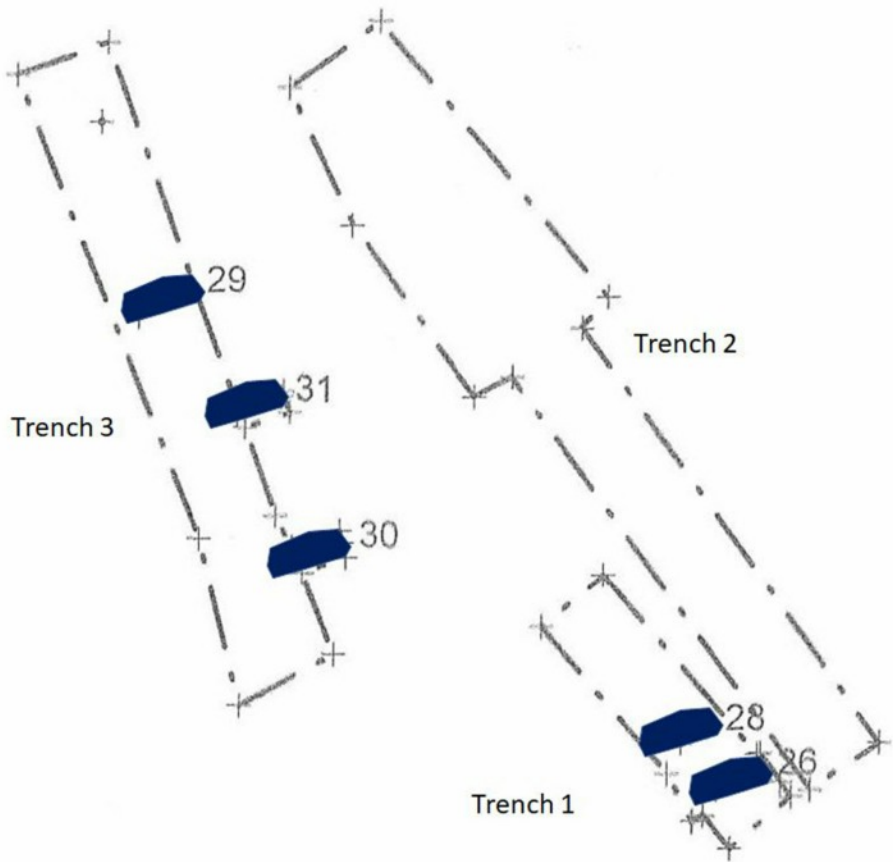
Since the last CLASP newsletter and due to the lifting of restrictions associated with the Covid pandemic we have been able to recommence and undertake some fieldwork projects during the last few months. Most importantly this included continuing the excavation of the Post Roman and Migration period cemeteries at Whitehall Farm, Nether Heyford. The intention was to recover two burials identified in 2019 which were not examined at the time and to investigate as yet unexplored zones within the overall layout of the burial ground.

Elsewhere CLASP embarked on two further geophysical surveys in the hinterland of the Posting Station of Bannaventa, gaining coverage of an area previously unexamined and looking afresh at another area which was lacking in detail. One of these geophysical surveys focused on the location of a possible western half of the southern suburb. This area of the site is aligned along Watling Street in a zone lying beyond the extra mural development whose eastern sector had been examined prior to the lock down. The other area lies in the extra mural area adjacent to the Roman carriageway to the north west of Bannaventa where an extensive corridor of tree planting is about to take place and an archaeological evaluation was necessary. In this edition of the newsletter, I intend only to comment on the former one, associated with the southern suburb, which helps to understand the layout and context of that area in greater detail.

The excavation on the Post Roman & Migration period cemetery at Whitehall in early September enabled CLASP to open three new trial trenches on the site. Trench 1 included the location of the burials observed in 2019 but which had not been excavated, whilst Trench 2 & Trench 3 were positioned adjacent to the known burial layout where no previous fieldwork other than some test pitting had been undertaken. The archaeological rationale was to recover the previously identified unexcavated skeletons and to try and discover the extent and regularity of the overall distribution of any remaining to be recorded. This excavation was well supported with about 25 volunteers attending every day. Training sessions on Stratigraphy, Surveying and Human skeletal bone analysis were offered and I would like to thank Tony Harrison, Colin Evans and Dale Munn for supplying these sessions. Dale was also able to clean and

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record some of the bones, indicate the disturbed collection of bones came from an individual, and answer many of the volunteers' questions concerning the skeletons as the excavation developed.



Whitehall Farm Post Roman & Migration period cemetery: excavation trenches & new burial location

The bones of six individuals were retrieved from this year's excavation with five still in situ whilst the remaining individual had been heavily disturbed by ploughing and surface stripping with all the bone having to be recovered from the topsoil. Fortunately, we were able to look at the appropriate sections of the spoil mounds which underwent extensive sieving to maximise disarticulated bone retention. Three of the other skeletons had also been damaged by the

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plough and were found to be lying partially in the plough horizon. The survival of the archaeology was reasonably good but did demonstrate that the site overall was still subject to active erosion and that any remaining archaeology would not survive in the long term.

All five skeletons (Graves 26, 28, 29, 30 & 31) were aligned with their heads at the western end and their feet at the eastern edge of the individual grave cut. This configuration is seen in the majority of the Post Roman burials at the site and is a characteristic upon which we can speculate that all of the skeletons revealed this year belong to the fifth century AD cemetery and that all demonstrate traits that have heavy Christian overtones. Currently it is believed that amongst the burials we have two males, two women and a child about two to three years old. These inhumations occupy locations at the south and western edges of the general distribution of the graves. This fact is still strongly suggestive of an organised linear alignment behind the structure of the cemetery and is indicative of an ongoing management of the burial ground over time. The ritual elements remain consistent with previous discoveries

although the distribution of inhumations and grave goods across the cemetery is posing some interesting interpretive dilemmas and scenarios for me to ponder.

An initial analysis of the assemblage of bones associated with the disturbed skeleton found in the surface stripped plough soil, although insufficient to allow gender or age to be inferred, allowed us to see that the bones recovered represented a single person. However, study of the bones permits us to assert that the individual concerned suffered from Spina Bifida Occulta which affects the bottom of the spine.



Whitehall Farm Post Roman & Migration period cemetery: Aerial Photograph Trench 3 excavation showing Grave 29, 30 & 31)

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Only one of the five excavated inhumations contained a skeleton which had been interred with a discreet range of grave goods. The individual in Grave 29 was laid to rest with a personal knife and copper alloy tweezers. These items were positioned on the left-hand side of the body at the waist and were probably hung on a belt, the decorated strap end cover of which we also recovered during excavation. Unfortunately, this will require significant conservation of the object before we can say much about it.



Whitehall Farm Post Roman & Migration period cemetery: Grave 29 Small Finds

This selection of items is interesting as it constitutes, as with other examples of burials containing grave goods from the cemeteries at Whitehall Farm, a public statement of the deceased which is full of symbolic meaning, presumably reflecting the individual's social identity and standing at the time of death. Understanding the reasons for inclusion and absence of these finds will eventually lead to a more perceptive interpretation of the site and its place in the wider social context. The copper alloy tweezers are significant if uncommon finds in Post Roman burials, reflecting the influence of late Roman material culture. After conservation any incised or punched decoration linked to this item should become more apparent. The inclusion of these objects is suggestive of regular use during life and of deliberate placement within the grave. Interestingly

tweezers found with inhumations are not necessarily gender specific as they are with cremations but they do tend to be associated with older people.

We are at a point now with the Whitehall Post Roman & Migration period cemeteries where most if not all of the fieldwork that can be carried out has

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been undertaken. However, further scientific study is required before the data can be brought together for final publication. A review of the fieldwork will also still be initiated in order to see whether any unexplored areas still exist and be worth excavating.

Turning to the geophysical Survey on Sand Pit Field which is part of the wider southern hinterland of Bannaventa there are new and important findings to discuss. This fieldwork was of particular interest as it allowed us to explore previously unknown archaeological anomalies which were observed in the area constituting the western half of a previously explored part of the major southern suburb. You might remember in the 2020 Spring Newsletter I commented on the 3 ha geophysical and fieldwalking survey of the eastern half of this suburb located in Lower Shawney Field. These earlier surveys revealed a series of irregular elongated enclosures and tenements aligned along a postulated Roman carriageway of Watling Street which appeared to be expanding in the late 4th century AD.



Bannaventa Southern Suburb Geophysical Survey Sand Pit Field

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The new survey covered an area of 2.7 ha directly mirroring that of the earlier fieldwork on the other side of the modern roadway. We located immediately adjacent to the eastern boundary hedge of Sand Pit field another series of irregular elongated enclosures and tenements just like those previously seen in 2020. These features can also be observed by the naked eye as earthworks in the field as well as geophysical anomalies. All of these appear to be aligned presumably along the western edge of the Roman carriageway now under the modern lane. These features stretched back into the field a distance of between 30 – 60m and appeared to terminate in track and roadways connecting the site to the wider landscape further west.

An area of intense stippling in the middle of these enclosure features probably represents the position of the late 19th or early 20th century sand pits after which the field is named. Some of the enclosures appear to contain structure but further fieldwork is required. The field is under pasture and has been for a long time as it was part of the parkland surrounding Norton Hall at least from the mid-19th century, which probably accounts for the survival of the earthworks.

A point of interest is that the area occupied by the suburb roughly equates to that lost with the reduction in overall size of Bannaventa during the later Roman period when the small-town was reduced to establish the parameters of the subsequent walled Posting Station. We might speculate that this development, set against the dynamics of the focal point of the site, led to the expansion of the suburb during the mid to late 4th century AD. They leave a physical echo in the overall development of Bannaventa of that social upheaval caused by the enforced political and social changes enforced and resulting in the movement of the inhabitants of the site from a long-established area to a relatively new one. Equally we need to understand that if the suburb was just part of a wider ribbon development of the site situated either side of Watling Street, why did the people living here bother to mark out the perimeter of both the small-town or the posting station externalising their suburb in relation to the heart of the settlement?

Finally, and unfortunately, not long after the publication of the Spring Newsletter my rather optimistic assessment of the future for the Field Centre at its current location was rather crushed. Since then, the perspective new owners

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have pulled out of the acquisition and the site was placed back on the market. Our latest understanding is that a potential buyer has come forward and we are awaiting the outcome of this and a possible meeting with that new ownership to learn of their intentions for us and the site.

Again, I would like to thank you all for your continued support and enthusiasm especially as we are now returning to some sort of normality in using the Field Centre more regularly. I also look forward to giving a more detailed summary of our recent fieldwork at this year's AGM.....hopefully see you there!

From Jennifer Smith, Harpole Heritage Group

We started our meetings again in August and were pleased to be back amongst people again after Covid lockdown. Alan Clark gave an interesting presentation about "Northampton Victorian Gaol" and we hope to follow this up with a visit to the site in the new year.

We also welcomed 33 members and friends to an Afternoon Tea, we had a caterer in and the food was delicious and enjoyed by all.

In September we heard from Colin Rowe about the "Luxurious Locomotion - The History of the Orient Express". We have a number of members who are "Railway buffs" and are now hoping to win the lottery so that they can afford to go on it.!

Jennifer Smith secretary, Harpole Heritage Group

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
