



CLASP

Community Landscape & Archæology Survey Project NEWSLETTER



Local Heritage initiative



ROMAN RESEARCH TRUST

Website: www.claspweb.org.uk

Charity No 1111667

Autumn 2022

From Rob Close, Chairman of the Organising Committee

In 2022 CLASP carried out two excavations – at Thrupp farm and at Manshead. This represented follow-up work from previous digs and insights gained from our Geophysics work. Those that attended the sessions seemed, as always, to enjoy the sessions. My thanks to everyone that made these possible.

CLASP's membership has been running at around the 75 level. Many of you cannot get along to digs, but hopefully will be able to join the next round of Zoom lectures – to be announced soon. Membership renewals for this year due from April (but often renewed at the AGM) are currently on the low side. Please renew your membership. Only £10.

Steve Young and I have met in late October with the new owner of the site where the Field Centre is based. We have agreed to have an initial three-year lease, but with a six-month break clause to ensure we are not locked into financial arrangements that we cannot afford. Our big worry (like everyone) is the ongoing cost of electricity.

The Archive team is now meeting at the Field Centre on a Tuesday and Wednesday to methodically check and update the record of finds, with a focus on the roof tile from Harpole so that we can deposit these at the

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Northants Archaeology Resource Centre at Chester farm. Depositing these will free up room at the Field Centre and will also surface any issues in moving artefacts to Chester Farm so that we can resolve these ahead of the complete move of our artefacts, should we ever decide to close the Field Centre.

When presenting the Accounts at the AGM I stressed a number of key points:

- For the 2021 to 2022 financial year, membership and other donations more than covered the non-Field Centre running costs of CLASP (Insurance, website, affiliations, equipment etc)
- The Income from the digs covered the running costs of the digs
- £500 from Harpole and the profit from the 100 Club made a good contribution to the rent of the Field Centre, but we need to be continuously raising funds to cover the future costs. Thank you to everyone that is a member of the 100 Club.
- Much of CLASP Funds come from donations and grants for specific purposes and are therefore ring-fenced. This includes £2,550 to cover the cost of moving the artefacts. We have a grant of £2,500 from OneFamily plus the ongoing profit from the 100 Club plus some unallocated funds that can be put towards funding future rents, but it would be prudent to undertake fund raising.

There are so many unsung persons that contribute to the ongoing activities of CLASP, but there is much that needs to be done.

- Two Trustees are taking the lead on Fund Raising. If any member has experience or interest in fundraising we would appreciate your involvement.

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- We would also welcome support from anyone that has interest in working with computer applications. One specific is to learn how we process our geophysical data, so we do not have a dependency on one person.
- I made the request at the AGM for someone to take on the role of Chairman of the Organising Committee. This Committee has a key role in handling logistical matters such as the organisation of fieldwork and maintaining the field centre. It also manages communication to members and affiliate societies. If no one takes the Chairmanship on, the Committee will not fulfil its remit and yet more work will fall on the Trustees. If no members put their hands up, we will also reach out to Volunteering bodies to find persons that have the various skills we need. For those that cannot renew on line, the membership form is included at the end of this Newsletter.

DEVELOPMENTS AT THRUPP; from Marcus Lewis

More than 20 years ago planning for the expansion of Daventry along both sides of the B4036 from Daventry towards Thrupp Lodge was envisaged. The land had been transferred to Christ Church College, Oxford after the dissolution of the Monasteries, although Lower Thrupp Grounds had been purchased by Oliver Adams.

The properties included Jubilee Farm and House, Daventry, at one time The Mulberry Restaurant; The White House, demolished in 1964, where a murder was committed in 1852, Lower Thrupp farm Norton, Thrupp Lodge, Norton and part of Manor farm Norton. Thrupp (Thorpe) had been abandoned in 1489 when 100 residents had been evicted, A comprehensive study of medieval Thrupp has been carried out by Jim Aveling, Jackie Hibbert and the late Gren Hatton. Although the village had been in decline for some years before the eviction many fields were showing ridge and furrow where the cultivation of woad had been carried out in the 18th century.

In 2000-2004 a limited geophysical survey was undertaken by MOLA on behalf of Croudace, the developer with the intension of development of 3600 houses although no trial holes were executed.

A second but comprehensive survey was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology on behalf of Barrett Homes in 2016 with many areas showing human occupation back to the Iron Age. The exploration at Jubilee Farm and Lower Thrupp Grounds entailed 46 trenches and found evidence of a Roman farmstead with many and various artefacts including a funerary urn.



This was discovered only 4 inches from a 20th century land drain. SP 59046338.

Further surveys of the area discovered evidence of brick kilns between Thrupp Spinney and the Grand Union Canal which appear to be after the medieval period.

A pottery was located behind Thrupp Lodge in 19th century supplying tiles, pots and bricks. The nearby canal crossing of Mad Sam's Lane was probably constructed of bricks from these kilns. SP50986506.

Over the past few years several geophysical surveys and have been carried out by CLASP members in the area around Thrupp Lodge, including the 'Moat and fields and Thrupp Grounds with kind permission of Joseph Adams. The area adjacent to Thrupp Lodge is possibly Roman although ancient walls were discovered in Victorian times whereas nearer to Thrupp grounds there is extensive evidence of the medieval deserted village.

Further geophysical surveying has taken place by Cotswold Archaeology in 2022 at Lower Thrupp, Thrupp Lodge, and Manor Farm, Norton SP59476417 Although on excavation only a very few ditches were found contrary to the geophysical results.

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Excavations at Spring Close 2017

Further recent work has discovered evidence of Iron Age occupation. Future work will hopefully provide more understanding of the local archaeology.

Jennifer Smith, Secretary Harpole Heritage Group.

It has been very cold on some evenings and very hot on others, but our members still came to the meetings. In March Roy Smart gave a presentation about "Wallis Simpson and the 1936 Abdication" when we learned things which we did not know.

Peter Perkins from NIAG told us about "Edward Harrison Barwell" the 19th Century Iron Founder of Northampton. In May as well as our AGM, Betty West spoke about "Nancy Wake" the first woman to leave Harrington airfield during WW1. It was good to have a lady speaker as most speakers are men.

Being Jubilee year June Bennett and Jennifer Smith gave their memories of the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977 which went on over four days, different to this year, when events planned were cancelled due to rain. In July Steve

Parish came with friends and spoke about "Life Religious" and the Cluniac Nunns of Delapre Abbey.

From Stephen Young, Archaeological Director

This is a first for CLASP, but hopefully not one we shall repeat, we are publishing a near Christmas edition of the Autumn newsletter (although in defence we shouldn't lose sight of the fact that we have published thirty-five issues starting way back in 2005 which is an excellent achievement in itself).

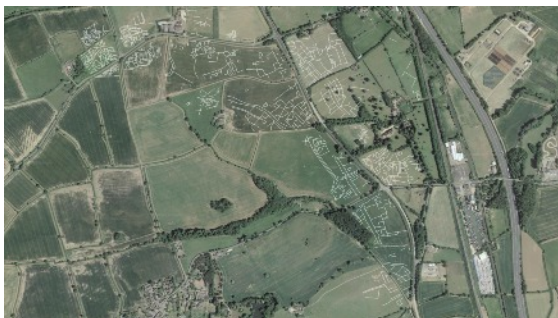
The year since the spring newsletter has been extremely busy



Roman Greyware jar Mid 2nd – 3rd century AD Watling Street Alignment

on many fronts for myself and the trustees particularly in relation to securing the charity's future. This point I think is worth making as without this supporting effort maintaining the necessary infra structure, our fieldwork related activities would be impossible to continue or develop. However, opportunities abound and I want to comment on two initiatives undertaken and organised by CLASP in the late summer. Both events happened at the same site the southern Extra-mural area and suburb of the Roman Posting Station and Small Town of Bannaventa (Whilton Lodge, Northants). This year's fieldwork is a continuation of the wider project to explore the character, extent and layout of this important settlement, its immediate hinterland and its relationship to one of the premier routeways of Roman Britain.

I can, however, mention in passing that several of our individual members had an opportunity to assist in a trial trenching exercise on the Althorp Estate which was led and organised by them as preparatory work for a more detailed examination, probably next year, of a Roman villa located there. We wait to see whether this will involve us or not.



Cartographic map of Bannaventa

We are also making progress in the production of a cartographic representation of the area showing all the features observed during the extensive geophysical survey (360ha) of Bannaventa. It is a massive undertaking which will enable us to enhance our interpretation of the data acquired from fieldwalking, metal detecting and excavation by placing those findings into a better understood spatial context.

The first stage of this year's investigation was the continued excavation of a 'pit', located and partially examined during fieldwork in 2019 just before the Covid epidemic during our last visit to the site. Human bones were observed in the northern half of the feature but not investigated, these remains having to wait until the obtaining of a licence authorising the exhumation, which only became possible after the end of lock down. This was accompanied by the trial trenching of the Roman alignment of Watling Street in the zone between the extra-mural area and the extensive suburb located to the south of the walled area just above the flood plain of the little brook which is a feeder stream for the river Nene. The objective was to obtain an understanding of the structure, composition and status of the remaining stratigraphy of the Roman carriageway.

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A second non-intrusive project focused on a fieldwalking initiative encompassing the same area but covering the whole field. Its purpose was to assess the usefulness of our new bespoke GPS systems (CLASP_DA_Mk3) under actual field conditions and to evaluate the potential of the new methodological approaches we might adopt. This is due to the improved accuracy (within half metre) and quality of the data retrieved and the contingent expansion in capability these devices afford us for large scale field walking. It would enable us to move away from the established strategies of stint & traverse or a grid-based process (5m, 10m or 20m) for individual artifact location and recovery, the success of which would be quite mind blowing for addressing this type of challenge in the future, as to do the same activity with a theodolite and crew would be extremely problematic not to say resource intensive.

Excavation of the 'pit' feature is the final phase of a range of methodological approaches employed on the wider project including geophysical survey, field walking, metal detecting as well as trial trenching and feature excavation. Without this final interjection our understanding of the chronology, relationship and character of the many different elements of the Roman settlement would be impossible. The feature itself lies within a Roman field system to the east of the original alignment of Watling Street that crosses Manshead field and is adjacent to the remains of a large, late Roman timber structure identified in an earlier geophysical survey and subsequently partially excavated in 2019.

Material retrieved from the southern half of feature excavated in the same year included significant elements of a horse and the complete skeleton of a medium sized dog. Human long bones from a right leg were discerned and this year's excavation of the northern half of the pit revealed the almost complete skeletons of two individuals. Interestingly, apart from the

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animal and human bone assemblage no other artifacts relating to the burials were recovered other than residual Roman pottery (mainly 2nd/3rd AD). This had been introduced to the feature from the fill of a Roman ditch that constituted part of a later field boundary that lay over and bisected the pit. The archaeological stratigraphy suggests the pit and the bone assemblage associated with it might well be late Iron Age or from the Iron Age/Roman transition period.



'Pit' burials

The existence of the 'pit' and the burials contained within it are of great interest because of the unusual depositional traits exhibited here: these being the mixture of human and animal skeletons within the feature, the lack

of any grave cut or grave goods deposited with these skeletons, and the apparent absence of respect for the way the individuals have been interred.

One can only conclude our ancestors are making a clear statement but unfortunately the meaning of which remains obscure, possibly hinting that a darker subtext may well be at play, an intention which should not be ruled out or underestimated. Ritual and belief are difficult to disentangle in connection with the thinking of our forebears. Should we also reflect on the fact that the dog appears to be laid on top of the horse which is mirrored by the two skeletons who are laid on top of each other?

The skeletons are aligned roughly east/west with the head of the lower 'victim' towards the eastern end of the pit and the body lying on its side facing left whilst the upper individual's

head is to the west and the body lies on its side facing right. Can we ascribe any weight to the physical opposition of the bodies in the interred position either in a ritual or status sense or is it just a case of chance or coincidence? Analysis of the two individuals' skeletons by Dale Munn implies the upper one is a female aged 26-35 and the lower one an adolescent aged 12-17. The position of the female's right arm suggests the individual was thrown into the pit rather than placed. However, the juxtaposition between the two bodies is indicative of some sort of symbiotic link between the two skeletons. Based on the position of the bodies and the dental condition of the upper skeleton as opposed to the lower, one might suggest perhaps a mistress servant relationship as part of the depositional religious process but this is purely speculative at this point.

Equally they could be deviant burials representing criminal or outcast elements of society. No signs of sharp or blunt force trauma were present and the cause of death is difficult to determine. Should either individual have been garrotted or strangled these rarely leave any marks on bone.

I am extremely pleased that, thanks to a very fortuitous donation, we are hopeful of obtaining two carbon dates to verify the actual date of both individuals and therefore the date of the feature. However, the archaeology indicates the pit and its burials are highly unlikely to have any association with the late Roman timber structure but represent activity in the pre or early invasion occupation of the site. Their connection to the cremated material found in the same general area also has to be resolved. Interestingly, a potential comparable deposition was excavated at Tripontium (J. Lucas, 2005 Fourth & Final Report p 46-47). Only in this example the two skeletons associated with a horse or pony burial are male and they lie beside each other rather than on top of each other. A great deal more research is needed here amongst other published

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and unpublished reports in order to place our burial pit into a meaningful social context.

Away from the burial pit to the south west the trial trench across the Roman Watling Street alignment allowed us to identify the carriageway foundations of this very important road. The overall trial trench which was aligned east to west was over 20m long and about 1.5m wide and lies on the interface between the brook flood plain and the significant rise leading up towards the southern Extra Mural area.

Our archaeological intention was not only to explore the road alignment and the construction methods used but also to investigate whether anything else lay beside or was associated with the throughfare. The excavated remains implied an 8m wide throughfare composed of a compacted substrate of irregular limestone fragments although some larger displaced potential surface or curb stones were observed. There appeared to be no signs of any associated drainage ditches or indeed other features, with the foundations resting on a clay layer base. However, the pottery from the alluvium deposits above the clay either side tended to produce elements of vessels rather than individual sherds, perhaps implying a different depositional method at play where significant portions of or whole vessels are being disposed of rather than the accumulated detritus of household waste found across the rest of the site.

The appearance of the irregular metalled surface gave rise to an intriguing theory concerning the approach of the road towards the settlement. The rise from the brook floodplain to the promontory on which the Posting Station of Bannaventa stands is quite steep on the Extra-mural side although this has been significantly diminished by recent ploughing and may have presented difficulties in antiquity for the movement of

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wagons and carts approaching from the south side along the road from Lactodurum (Towcester). One could speculate that a raised agger or bridge structure would have been necessary here to facilitate the entrance of wheeled traffic to the posting station and yet the remains examined suggest some sort of a metalled ford across the brook floodplain. An extensive and dense stone scatter lies to the north west of the excavated carriageway and this may well hold the answer to this conundrum and whether we are looking at different strategies being applied to solve this problem. Only further excavation next year will help resolve this issue.

Apart from the corroded and concreted coin found in the makeup of the road a moulded lead object was also recovered. Its meaning and function are difficult to interpret but



Moulded lead object

the attention to detail regarding the ornamentation of the piece indicates it was designed to be seen, if not admired. It might have been affixed to a cart or box although there are no attachment holes to secure the piece.



Watling Street Foundations on the road

There are no attachment holes to secure the piece.

ment holes to secure the piece.

An area of nearly 8 ha was surveyed using the new GPS systems and in excess of 4,500 artifacts were collected and

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individually logged. The accuracy of the distribution is a quantum leap forward on current capability and should allow a greater degree of confidence in the interpretation of artifact spread in relation to the potential dating of features identified during the geophysical survey. Now the fun part starts with the processing and analysis of the assemblage which I hope to report on in the first of our new 2023 Zoom lectures starting on Thursday 26th January.....don't forget to book an invite on line. The lecture will examine the field data, place it in context with similar statistics derived from previous grided field walking/metal detecting surveys and comment on the application of this approach that utilized the CLASP_DA_Mk3 with regard to future fieldwork in mind.

The Field walking exercise took approximately 176 hours of actual field-based activity and was undertaken over a period of 34 days starting whilst we were digging and carrying on until the field was sown in early October, spending from 2 to 12 hours a day depending on weather and other constraints. I carried out the survey by myself to try and understand the positive and negative aspects of the new machines and to assess them in relation to our future fieldwalking strategy and how we can apply or mitigate any aspects of their use. It also



GPS Fieldwalking Pottery distribution

enabled me to limit the amount of bias in the material retrieved to achieve an optimum statistical outcome by having in effect a single control factor.

Apart from recovering pottery sherds, artifacts in the fieldwalking exercise, items such as coins and frag-

ments of rotary quern stones, were collected and individually located. A small assemblage of six fragments of rotary querns

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were retrieved from the fieldwalking survey, probably mainly fragments of lower stones although one is a clearly shaped upper mill stone. All of the millstones have evident signs of dressing for grinding corn. Three recognised types are present in the assemblage with examples composed of either Millstone Grit (Northern England), old red sandstone (Forest of Dean/WYE Valley) whilst another one is composed of lava (Continental and of northern European origin).

A comparable number of Roman coins were identified through metal detecting, fieldwalking and from excavation. The majority came from the Extra-Mural area surrounding the Watling Street Trial Trench with only one recovered from the suburb area.

All but one of the seven Roman coins recovered are very eroded but initial identification by my self suggests a possible As of Trajan (98-117AD), a nummus of Crispus (318/324 AD) the son of Constantine the Great, as Caesar, a copy or counterfeit barbarian radiate of the 3rd century AD, a possible Radiate of the Gallic Empire in the late 3rd century AD and two unidentifiable 3rd/4th coins.



Roman Rotary Quern Fragment

Unfortunately, the most important of all the coin finds which was found in the makeup of Watling Street carriageway during excavation has so much concretion affixed to it that identification as of this moment is impossible.

I can also update comments made in the Spring Newsletter concerning the location of the possible Late Iron Age round

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house in 14 Acre field. After reassessment of the coordinates of the features it has become evident that the metalled spread observed and excavated there was indeed the structural remains of the internal flooring of that building rather than an attendant courtyard surface. I hope therefore that we will be able to return to this area to complete our investigation of the structure and to provide a definitive chronological profile of the remains - something for us to look forward to next year along with more work on the Watling Street alignment and the character of at least one structure in the southern suburb at Bannaventa.

Finally, I hope to be able to say something in the next issue about our newly purchased Infra-red camera and how we intend to use it as another tool in our geophysical survey armoury. Suffice to say that currently we are working on its incorporation with our drone facility for aerial survey - not as straight forward as you may possibly think.

As always thanks for your continued support and I hope to see you either at the field site or on one of our projects in



Don Attwell & the CLASP_DA_MK3 GPS

List of Contacts for CLASP Associations

Organisation	Contact	Tel
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

SUBSCRIPTION REMINDER

Although CLASP's financial year has changed from *1st Sept to Aug 31st to 1st April to March 31st*, the Treasurer is happy for members to continue paying their subscriptions in September or at the AGM.

If you wish to rejoin CLASP, details of how to make a payment can be found on the CLASP Website. If you have already rejoined, please accept my sincere apologies for this reminder.

Julia Johns, Membership Secretary

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Reg Charity No 1111667

www.claspweb.org.uk

NB: By completing this form and submitting it, you are giving your consent to CLASP to store the information you provide, and to use it within CLASP.

Membership to CLASP is payable annually. If you do not wish to pay by Bank Transfer, your subscription (£10.00) may be paid by cheque and sent to the address below. Please make cheques payable to CLASP. In order to keep our records up to date, please complete ALL the sections below whether you are a new member or renewing your existing membership and, **please return this form with your payment.** Thank you.

(PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY) Title (Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss/other)

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