



CLASP

Community Landscape & Archæology Survey Project NEWSLETTER



Website: www.claspweb.org.uk

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Historically, CLASP has always published two Newsletters each year. Originally, they were dated by month/year but more recently we have changed the titles to 'Spring' and 'Autumn' and these titles will continue to be used but do not relate to any specific dates.

Notes on behalf of the Chair of Trustees by Stephen Young

The last six months have seen several developments in the organization and the running and work of CLASP. However, I would like to first take this opportunity on behalf of CLASP, to express my condolences to the Chairman of Trustees, Rob Close, on the death of his wife, Christine. She was an active volunteer and enthusiastic supporter of the charity and we will miss her.

Facebook.

We would like to thank Gina Brown and Alan Standish for their outstanding work in creating and developing the CLASP Facebook page over the last three years and would like to welcome our new Facebook team: Ruth Downey, Rachael Wilkinson, Richard Blackburn and Mike Arnold. Please do message any one of them on Facebook if you find something of interest to be uploaded. It's great to have this team of administrators but they do need your input too.

CLASP archive.

Talks are ongoing regarding transferring an initial shipment of artifacts from the CLASP archive to the Archaeological Research Centre (ARC), Chester

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Estate, Irchester as part of our ongoing overall archive strategy. The timescale for this is by the end of July but this depends on process and circumstance.

Free carbon date.

We have been given a free carbon date by CARD (Archaeological Research Services) for one of the warrior skeletons (Grave 12) from Whitehall Farm Post Roman and Early Saxon cemetery. This will bring the total number of dates to five and this one is particularly important because we have no carbon date regarding the inhumations for this phase of the site's use.

Grants.

We are applying for a grant to produce a specialist bone report on the Whitehall Farm skeletons and for further isotope work on them to ascertain a greater understanding on their area of origin and dietary history.

100 club.

Most shareholders have already renewed for the current financial year. This is an important mechanism for raising funds to cover our increasing costs and I would like to encourage any member to take part either on a monthly or annual basis. Details are on the website.

Requests for archaeological assistance.

We are increasingly being asked to provide support for archaeological projects from groups who are not affiliated with CLASP. This is mainly connected to geophysical prospection but also in integrated fieldwalking survey. If you are interested in developing your field skills in this area and might like to help, please contact the Chair of trustees or myself.

If you are also interested in computerisation in archaeology we would love to hear from you if this is an area of interest.

From Steve Young, Archaeological Director

Rather later than usual, this latest issue of the director's view, after many vicissitudes which included a dose of Covid, is literally hot of the presses in terms of the culmination of the archaeological fieldwork undertaken by CLASP since the turn of the year. My comments focus on a geophysical survey and trial trenching of a field to the west of the Long Buckby to Daventry

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crossroads on the A5 (Watling Street). The field in question is subject to a tree planting scheme and the fieldwork was designed to investigate whether any archaeological anomalies could be observed in a geophysical survey of the site and then, if that achieved a successful outcome, to evaluate the nature, status and character of the remains by trial trenching of those features identified before planting commences.

In the context of the wider landscape the field lies well to the north of the Roman Posting Station and Small Town of Bannaventa (Whilton Lodge) and east of the deserted medieval village of Thrupp, Norton on the northern most edge of the promontory upon which both these settlements stand. This potentially important hinterland area is aligned along the western side of Watling Street and ideally placed for servicing the needs of the Roman and medieval period sites.

Little is known of the archaeological potential of the area beyond that derived from an earlier partial geophysical examination undertaken in connection with planned changes in the alignment of the B4036 and the construction of a new roundabout at the current junction with the A5. The proximity to the nearby sites and the odd coin found through metal detecting provide the only other support for potential archaeological activity.

Initially we undertook a magnetometer survey utilising the CLASP Bartington dual array instrument. This centred on the proposed tree planting area which comprised mainly a 20m corridor strip around the exterior of the field adjacent to the hedge line. However, the central zone of the field was also examined to assist in ascertaining the extent of any archaeological remains and to establish the overall context of any geophysical anomalies associated with the field. The survey highlighted several archaeological features across the area both from within the tree planting corridor and from across the southern part of the field. Nothing of interest was located in the northern third of the field other than relatively modern water and gas pipe alignments. The otherwise absence of features can probably be explained by the aspect of the field; a significant slope falls away from the raised promontory upon which the better part of both settlements lie and in this case is less conducive to any type of development in the Roman or medieval era.

Those anomalies that were identified and interpreted as features included the alignment of a major west/east track way. During the wider survey of the site

in the adjoining fields to the west an extension of the road way was discovered previously dominating the centre of the deserted medieval village. A section excavated through the metallised surface produced a fragment of a late Saxon/Viking Seax knife (in the fill). The trackway commences on the westward approach to the deserted medieval village of Thrupp through which it meanders before running out and along 14 Acre Field before moving towards Watling Street.

In addition, several ditches and enclosure boundaries are evident alongside the trackway suggesting a homogeneously consistent archaeological landscape concomitant with the thoroughfare and possibly at times dependent upon it. Our understanding of the relationship between these features is paramount to any meaningful interpretation and understanding of the archaeological anomalies present in the field. However, we cannot without retrieving the necessary dating evidence, draw the conclusion that the palimpsest of features was always related throughout time.

The geophysical survey also distinctly indicates at least one roundhouse in the vicinity of the thoroughfare. This is located within a clearly defined enclosure linked with the western element of the trackway alignment as it emerges into the field on its southern edge. Other examples may have existed within the same large enclosure but proof of their existence would be dependent on excavation in the future.

A small double ditched enclosure to the north of the trackway implies a specialist use of that area the dating of which could be very helpful in understanding the function, social and economic rationale for the development of this particular part of the landscape. An oval shaped enclosure can also be observed further to the east towards the centre of the field.

The feature mirrors similar such anomalies observed across the surrounding local landscape. These are possibly animal pounds and they appear to be a characteristic feature, although from which period cannot at the moment be confirmed. Speculation would suggest a medieval provenance connected to sheep husbandry.

Three areas of anomalies were selected for trial trenching and six trial trenches, 10 to 15m x 2m long were excavated, one in area 1, two in area 2 and

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three in area 3. On average 10 volunteers attended every day and I should say the archaeological context wasn't the easiest to read so the enthusiasm and commitment shown was extremely praiseworthy. The first trial trench area



Photo 1: 14 acre Geophysical Anomalies & Trial Trenching Areas

was associated with the feature identified within the tree planting corridor inside the hedge alignment of the A5 (Area 1 on photo 1). Although appearing to run in a north/south direction, the observed anomaly lacked definition or easy interpretation and excavation was necessary to try and establish its archaeological credentials. Disappointingly, excavation in Trial Trench 1 only revealed a drainage gully of indeterminable date whose grey scale silhouette on reflection was distinctly reminiscent of the geophysical visual profile linked to the modern gas and water pipelines in the survey data. Otherwise, only two residual sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from Trial Trench 1, probably of 14th/15th century AD date, and indicative of the wider scale medieval agricultural activity best associated with a manuring scatter around the deserted medieval village hinterland.

The second area of investigation was initially intended to examine the location of the observable anomaly of the suggested round house (Area 2 on photo 1). Unfortunately, it proved difficult to locate the exact position of this feature and our two trial trenches were positioned just to the west of our main

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objective. Nevertheless, these proved to contain extensive areas in the northern elements of the trial trenches of metallised ‘courtyard’ exterior surfaces



Photo 2: Enclosure Exterior Metallised Surfaces (Trial Trench 6)

probably related to the immediate exterior of the round-house presumably lying immediately to the east. This surface was very similar in construction and make up to the one excavated in the field immediately to the south of the B4036 in 2016 which contained some late Iron Age sherds embedded in its surface. Trial Trenches 2 and 6 however contained no datable evidence and one hopes investigation of the adjacent round house in the future will rectify this conundrum.



Photo 3: Two sections of ditches (Trial Trench 4)

Our third and final series of three Trial Trenches (Area 3 on photo 1) were chosen to examine the ditch system associated with the trackway and the intriguing double ditched enclosure located immediately to the north. These proved exceedingly helpful in dating or indicating the period of activity for two separate alignments of ditches identified from the geophysical survey. Elements of two ditches linked to these features were found in Trial Trenches 3, 4 and 5. Excavation allowed us to date the mostly northerly ditch to the Late Iron Age (Labelled A on photo 3) as the fill contained only sherds of that period. These sherds probably reflect the residual elements of one or two handmade vessels. A further Late Iron Age sherd was excavated in another section of the same ditch in Trial Trench 5. An Iron object of indeterminable use was also found but this will require X-raying to elicit more information.

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The more southerly of the features appeared to be a drainage ditch (Labelled B on photo 3) which had been re-cut at some stage and was filled with the detritus of the metallised surface of the trackway, thus illustrating that the ditch served its purpose to clear water off the thoroughfare. Two residual sherds were recovered from the fill of the drainage ditch: a colour coated sherd of Nene Valley ware and probably an early Norman post conquest rim fragment. Therefore, it is likely that the drainage ditch should be interpreted as relating to the medieval carriageway. Although sparse as an assemblage the difference in the dating of these features might hint that the full spread of geophysical anomalies across the field represent multi period utilization of the site rather than a single period of activity across the area. We might also speculate, taken with archaeological evidence from the immediate wider landscape, that a Late Iron Age inference particularly for the enclosures and their attendant structures, could imply a defused landscape of habitation consisting of small isolated farmsteads away from the focal point of that period's settlement site believed to have existed to the east of Watling Street.



Photo 4: Re-cut medieval trackway drainage ditch (Trial Trench 4)



Photo 5: Roman coin - Constantius Gallus 353 AD

Apart from the trial trenching and due to the cultivation of the field for the first time in many years we were also able to conduct a little impromptu metal detecting and unstructured field walking of the field itself. Thanks to the diligent work of our NARC detectorists eight Roman coins were recovered. One from the 2nd century, probably two from the third century and five from the 4th century AD. Five of these coins are

very eroded and await further study during post excavation. However, three others are recognisable and these can be identified as a sestertius or upondius of Lucilla (164-182 AD), daughter to Marcus Aurelius and his wife Faustina the Younger.

A coin of Constantius Gallus (353 AD) the half-brother of Julian the Apostate as Caesar with a soldier spearing a crouching barbarian on the reverse. The third coin is of Helena (337-341 AD) the mother of Constantine the Great with Pax (Peace) facing left holding a branch and lance on the reverse.



Photo 6: Helena 337 - 341 AD

An assemblage of 13 Roman sherds were also retrieved from the random field-walking. Virtually all of these were from coarse ware vessels and mostly comprised grey ware fabrics. Very abraded, they probably represent Roman manuring scatters rather than concentrated material reflecting occupational activity. Their importance taken with the distribution of Roman coins lies in the fact they demonstrate a level of activity in the area during

that period that points to a far more detailed role for the area within the hinterland of the Posting Station, but the extent of those activities is still to be defined. A final Roman artifact worth mentioning at this point found by the metal detectors is another mystery artefact, a bronze alloy scoop set on a mount similar in style to something sometimes found on brooches whose function is difficult to explain. It could represent some sort of personalized toiletry implement.



Photo 7: Roman mystery object

Apart from the Roman material, two 13th century AD medieval silver hammered coins were also recovered, one of which appears to be a penny of Henry III (1251-1273) of the voided Long-Cross type whilst the other is a smaller Short Cross voided option possible of Edward I. I'm not an expert in Medieval hammered silver coins so we will have to wait and see if these interpretations are seen as correct by an appropriate expert. However, and interestingly, these coins mirror the distribution of a similar range of hammered coins found in the surrounding fields probably implying a series of causal loses by the inhabitants of the deserted medieval *cont page 9*

village of Thrupp whilst engaged in agricultural activities. A small assemblage of nine medieval sherds like those of the Roman period indicate a similar type of manuring activity.



Photo 8: Medieval hammered silver coin

An unexpected assemblage from the freelance fieldwalking of the field was the finding of 37 worked flints dating from the Neolithic or earlier period. These mostly comprise waste flakes but include a couple of cores, a burin and a broken blade. These worked flints are not necessarily redolent of domestic activity but do suggest a more generalised occupation of the landscape at a more distant time in the past.

Again, thanks to everybody involved in this project and the other initiatives being undertaken at the field centre working on the overall CLASP archive especially in regard to sorting and recording of box flue patterns, tegular measurement and photography. Don't forget there will be other opportunities for you to become involved and I look forward to seeing you at them.

Deadline for the Autumn 2022 Newsletter will provisionally be Sunday, 11 September, 2022. 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

From Jennifer Smith, Harpole Heritage Group

Harpole Heritage Group are pleased that our members are still coming to the meetings after covid. they have come out on some very cold evenings.

In October Michael Johnson took us behind the scenes at the R.H.S. Flower Show at Hampton Court". In November we heard about Bassett Lowke "A Past Time Today - a Business Tomorrow" then in December we enjoyed a Fish and Chip supper.

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The new year started with John Griff from Radio Northampton with "Tales from the Padded Cell" he has a most interesting life. In February Ken Nokes spoke about "Shoes and Leather" - we had a full house as many of our members families made boot and shoes in their sheds, my own family included. We have been very fortunate to have had many good speakers over the years. The years are going by very quickly and we are all getting older, but we shall keep going whilst we can.

List of Contacts for CLASP Associations

Organisation	Contact	Tel
Weedon Bec History Society	Julia Johns	01327 341729
Harpole Heritage Group	Jennifer Smith	01604 831294
Whitehall Farm Roman Villa Landscape Project	Norman Garnett	01604 755479
Bugbrooke History Society	Alan Kent	01604 830518
Blisworth Heritage Society	Jim Aveling	01604 859109
History of Tiffeld Society	Steve Jowers	01327 350292
Northampton Artefact Recovery Club	Alan Standish	Not available
