



# CLASP

## Community Landscape & Archæology Survey Project NEWSLETTER



ROMAN RESEARCH TRUST

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

Charity No 1111667

Summer 2023

### Note from the Chairman

**Newsletter:** The Spring Newsletter is a lot later than normal to accommodate Steve's busy schedule.. Thank you to those of you that have contributed to this Newsletter. Contributions always welcome.

Malcolm Smith is our new Editor. Tony Johns has retired from this role having been Editor since 2007 Thank you so much Tony for doing this so well for CLASP over this period.

**Archaeological Day School:** This was held on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> May at the Percival GuildHouse (Adult Education centre) in Rugby with the Objective School being to find potential new members for CLASP. Steve and I presented modules that covered CLASP's Projects, how to start an archaeological project (using Barby Hill as an example), Field walking, Geophysics, Excavations, the use of Technology and how to identify finds. For the latter, the 8 attendees were given pottery from Tripontium to analyse. The

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session seemed to be enjoyed by those attending and we may repeat the session at Bradwell Abbey.

**2023 projects:** The Excavation at Manshead (Bannaventa) will be going ahead at the end of August / early September .However, we still cannot confirm the specific days as this depends on the crop. As soon as we know, we will email members and a booking form will appear on the website.

I hope to be organising Geophysics surveys over the next few months, so if you want to have a day out in the sun helping please email me at [rob.close1@gmail.com](mailto:rob.close1@gmail.com) and I will let you know specific dates.

**100 Club:** If you can spare £5 a month then please do sign up for the 100 Club run by Jim Aveling. This makes a much necessary contribution towards the £2000 p.a. rent for the Field centre. Many of you (but of course never me) have benefited from the 50% pay out of funds in the monthly draws.

**I look forward to seeing many of you in the flesh as we undertake our simmer activities.**

**Rob Close**

**Chairman**

**[rob.close1@gmail.com](mailto:rob.close1@gmail.com)**

## **The View from the Archaeological Director Summer 2023**

Since the last Autumn edition, the range of challenges and commitments associated with CLASP and the time demands upon myself have resulted in an extensive delay in the production of the usual Spring newsletter into one for the early summer. I should probably add, that poor health connected to the need to undertake extensive analysis and interpretation of fieldwork from last Autumn whilst preparing for other events, like the creation of course/lecture materials for both training courses and a series of zoom lectures and completing a commissioned report, have not been conducive to a prompt newsletter.

I hope therefore that as CLASP members you will be understanding of the situation and bear with me, especially as we are also currently undergoing a change of editor for the newsletter. On a personal level I would like to thank Tony Johns for all his efforts on our behalf and his willingness to address the many challenges of the role.

We have been fortunate in only ever having two editors and I have found Tony to be a superb and very dependable producer of our newsletter. His attention to detail and professionalism since taking over in 2007 has accounted for the majority of CLASP newsletters.

Our new editor is Malcolm Smith who I'm sure will be introducing himself to readers in due course. He has produced several publications; has extensive experience and I've known him for many years. Like Tony, I believe him to be a person of fortitude and high standards and I'm sure the future of the newsletter will rest in good hands with him.



**Photo 1 Overall Roman Pottery distribution**

In relation to CLASP fieldwork since last Autumn no new initiatives have been started apart from some commissioned geophysical work at Cogenhoe. Rob Close is now in charge of our Geophysical Surveying and has taken over responsibility for the instruments and interpretation of data from Fred Kay who has been a great stalwart in this area of our work. Our focus of activity remains on the archiving and processing of material at the Field Centre. This work is progressing well under Jackie Pyle and Sandra Deacon and our relationship with the new site owner is continuing to develop in a positive manner.

In the meantime, have spent a considerable amount of time on the analysis of the assemblages retrieved from the extramural area and suburb to the south of the Roman Posting Station at Bannaventa. The survey area covered 10.65 hectares of which approximately 7.48 hectares dealt with the extramural zone and 3.17 the location of the eastern half of the southern suburb. This involved a total of 36 days of fieldwalking and the recording of 5,149 targets with our new bespoke GPS system the CLASP\_DA\_MK3 developed by Don Attwell.

The importance of the project was to enable us to field test the effectiveness of the instrument and to explore the practicality of the new methodological approaches needed to undertake this and future fieldwork. Several aspects of our activity will consequently be affected, resulting in considerable changes to the rationale underpinning any future archaeological activities undertaken by CLASP. This technical development will alter both our ability to survey as well as record sites and assemblages. Importantly the new GPS instrument will enable us to achieve an acceptable level of surveying accuracy quickly whilst also making it easier to record locational coordinates. This will result in a reduced requirement for detailed knowledge and understanding of surveying instruments, the theory connected to theodolites

and automatic levels, and setting sites out. Literally anyone with limited surveying skills can now obtain the necessary locational coordinated and elevation details that are required for good quality results with a minimum of training or in depth understanding. It has highlighted however a challenge for overall interrelated accuracy levels in the integration of the different survey data be it GPS, theodolite, geophysical, Google or of OS origin. Hopefully the intricacies of this particular issue will be addressed by Colin Evans our surveying expert, Don Attwell and myself going forward.

Methodologically speaking there could be significant changes to our field walking process or at the very least an enhancement of our ability to offer different recording options depending on the archaeological requirements of a given situation. Most obviously we might no longer need or want to set out surveying grids which can be time and resource consuming. Removing the contextually less resonant grid square approach to use the unique plough horizon placement of the individual find spot is a promising step forward in understanding the distribution link between the spread of datable artifacts and the underlying stratigraphy.

This is surely an aspiration worth pursuing and one we will continue to analyse and explore. The ability to record accurately, assemblages with associated archaeological features observed during geophysical survey offers better prospects for examining chronological relationships in greater detail before resorting to excavation.



**Photo 2 The CLASP\_DA\_MK3 GPS Instrument**

I have spent the majority of time on exploring the pottery assemblage, concentrating on the 5015 sherds of diagnostically Roman date. As one would expect the majority of sherds are from utilitarian coarse ware vessels (87%) mixed with a much smaller contingent of fine table ware vessels (13%). The generic fabric profile of the assemblage is in line with data profile examples retrieved from other settlements in the neighbourhood examined in previous fieldwork by CLASP (Local People: Local Past Report). Greyware sherds are the most prominent group within the assemblage (2777:55.37%) followed by grogged ware (1381:27.54%) and then to a lesser extent oxidised (805:16.05%). There are virtually no calcite-gritted shelly ware sherds in the collection (52:1.04%) which demonstrates a lack of commercial penetration into the small-town posting station market. This

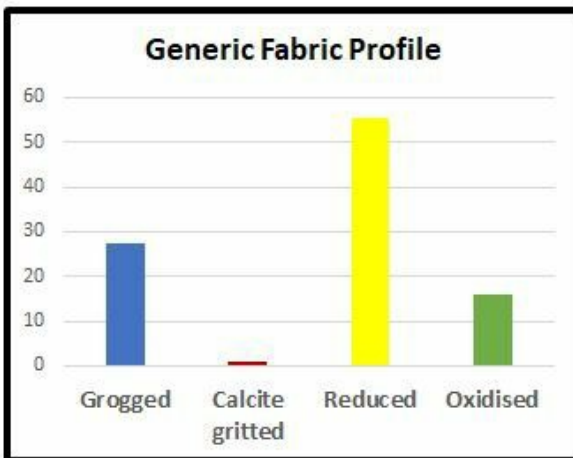
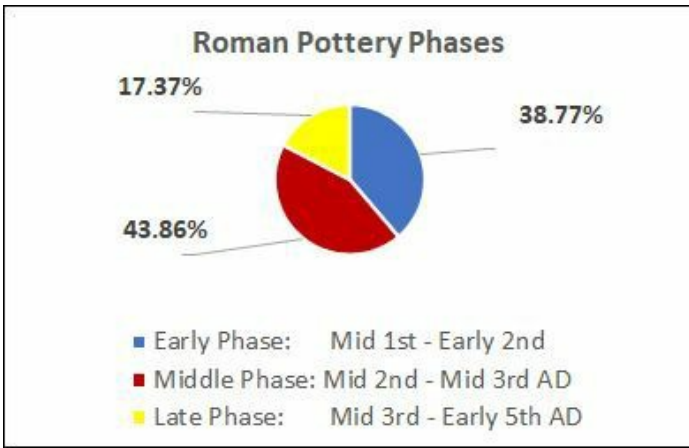
mirrors the ceramic situation on adjacent settlement sites previously explored. At least 48 different fabrics were identified during the analysis which illustrates a wide and varied access to a range of manufactured wares from local, regional and continental centres. Other periods of activity were represented by a single Late Iron Age, 10 Post Roman/early Saxon and 48 medieval sherds the quantity of which present in the survey suggest little occupational activity in the area during those times.

Not all the sherds can be dated within a specific time frame but of these 3,420 (68%) were datable to generic periods within the imperial era. These can be divided into three main phases which are best described as an early (mid-1st/early 2nd AD), mid (mid-2nd/early 3rd AD) and late (mid-3rd/4th AD) time scale divisions. At its most basic level the analysis of these enables us to interpret a large-scale chronological distribution of the material across the site through the Roman period enhancing our understanding of the development phases and structural evolution of the various parts of the overall settlement. These artefactual spreads highlight areas of general and focal activity across the southern extra mural and the eastern part of the suburb whilst providing a means to monitor growth of the settlement during the different periods of occupation. Completion of the 2022 analysis makes it possible to integrate this survey's findings with three other partial fieldwalking surveys based on fieldwalking grids that were undertaken in the area in 2004, 2007 and 2019. This will double the size of the assemblage available for interpretation to 12,198 underlining the statistical veracity of the data and the findings that will be based on them.

The initial early phase of activity accounted for 38.77% of the assemblage, whilst the mid date range registered 43.86% of the collection with the latest phase time period amounting to 17.37% of the material that could be diagnostically analysed. These basic figures are of interest in their own right



especially when contrasted and compared with the data from the Roman fieldwalking assemblages obtained from neighbouring settlements in the Watershed of the River Nene. Each phase is indicative of certain trends in consumption and market accessibility for ceramic products and underlines as well as informs our understanding of the chronological development of this area of Bannaventa.



**Photo 3    Generic Fabric Profile & Roman Pottery Phase Pie chart**

We can make some basic observations about the long-term activity across the extramural and suburban area based on these distribution maps. The area was certainly in use during the Late

Iron Age/conquest transition period (Early-mid 1st century AD) although the nature and character of that 'occupation' is difficult to tease out and was relatively limited. It probably reflects similar activity observed through excavation of archaeological features and geophysical anomalies that lie to the north of Bannaventa which appear to represent isolated farm enclosures associated with cultivating the wider landscape. Significant change is evident in the Agricolan to Trajanic era (Late 1st – Early 2nd century AD) when the extramural area and possibly the first stage of the suburban zone were formerly laid out perhaps in conjunction with the construction of the small-town perimeter bank and ditch.

The abundance of mid-2nd to mid-3rd century AD sherds demonstrates an intensification of activity throughout the area and implies changes in the focal points of occupation which are probably best seen as responses to the growth and development of the small-town before the imposition of the Posting Station enclave.

It is in the late Roman period (Mid 3rd – Early 5th century AD) that the next most fundamental change in the occupation of the area occurs. Large scale activity is maintained in discreet parts of extramural area but considerable expansion and refurbishment can be postulated for the suburb. Again, this may well be connected to the reduction in the size of the small-town and the construction of the defended and walled area of the Posting Station in its south western sector causing the need for the inhabitants to move into and enlarge the existing suburban area.

Further points can also be deduced concerning the different percentage levels obtained during the fieldwalking survey. The largest datable range of material identified is assignable to the mid-second/early third century AD which reflects the general trend found across other sites in the surrounding landscape that this is the period of the greatest consumption and availability

of Roman pottery for the settlements in the watershed area of the River Nene. Thus, it highlights this was probably the most robust and economically active period of occupation in the local area and for the southern extra-mural and suburban zone during the Roman era. However, there are more hidden meanings to be explored in the overall statistical detail.

Usually, the average for the mid Roman period distribution of sherds in the locality accounts for upwards of half to two-thirds of every Roman pottery assemblage whereas here it is considerably less than half. It indicates that the findings derived from the current fieldwalking survey reveal a robust local economy at this stage of Britannia's evolution as one would expect based on other data from the area. It is, however, noticeably not an overtly dominant one which characterises the story of development and growth of other settlement in the watershed area. It is symbolic of occupational continuity and relative prosperity but masks a far more complex picture of development and expansion in relation to the earliest and latest phases of activity across the site.

Looking at the number of sherds from the mid-1st to early 2nd century AD we can see that 38.77% is a considerable element of the overall assemblage and that this matches the data ranges from sites in Bugbrooke, Gayton and Harlestone parishes but exceeds the levels found on settlements in Flore, Harpole and Nether Heyford parishes. Settlements wax and wane through time and the information obtained from this survey indicates two possible lines of development for the southern extramural and suburban area. Firstly, the site was extremely active in the time of the initial Romanization of the landscape of the River Nene watershed and secondly the site had very strong links with the surrounding settlements which must have affected and shaped the growth of the community to which it must have provided a central servicing and supporting role. Meanwhile, the pottery assemblage from the mid-3rd to early 5th century AD (17.37%), although

considerably less than the early and mid-phases of activity in total amount of sherds identified, nevertheless is considerably higher as a percentage of sherds than all the neighbouring Roman settlements assemblages in the broader locality. This suggests a spectacular level of activity in the extramural and suburban area in the late Roman period as this area of the settlement undoubtedly supported the administrative and taxation role of the Posting Station on behalf of the central government as well as acting as an important part of the commercial hub for the locality.



#### **Photo 4 Roman pottery phase distribution**

Further analysis of the Roman pottery indicates trade links with the continent especially from the early 2nd into the 3rd century AD. This can be seen in the presence of Samian vessels and in the distribution of amphora (Dressel 20) sherds most likely olive oil containers of Spanish origin. Fragments of Central Gaulish black slipped ware and Lower Rhineland colour coated were also identified in the collection implying links to the northwestern provinces. The mortarium sherds, although only a small percentage of the total assemblage, demonstrate that 58.7% was being brought in from the nearby regional centre at

assemblages, often displaying the same or relatively close percentage levels in the site sherd collection, mirroring the availability of one fabric to replace the other at a similar level. It implies a fashionable aspect to pottery consumption that contributed to continuity concerning the choice for red slipped wares throughout the Roman period as an important part of fine ware services: a commercial desire incidentally that continued certainly in the Mediterranean area into the Post Roman and Byzantine period. The change in production supply reflects the decline in Samian ware manufacture which is not made or imported on a large scale anymore by the early 3rd century AD, to be replaced by the rise of the Oxfordshire colour coat industry that developed at that time utilising similar forms in vessel design and red slip finishes to take over that corner of the market.



**Photo 5 Red slip Fine Ware pottery distributions**

However, in the southern extramural area and suburb what is quite noticeable is not only that this phenomenon is present but that the percentage amount of material in the assemblage is unusually significantly different in this case. There is nearly double the amount of Oxfordshire colour coated fine ware from the mid-3rd to late 4th century AD (65%) than can be seen with the Samian of the mid-1st to late 2nd AD (35%). The Samian pottery distribution seemingly appears to demonstrate three regions of focal activity. The most northerly lies in the enclosures and structures immediately south of the Norton Road, with a heavier concentration along the top of the slope at the bottom of Upper Manshead and a third lighter spread across the eastern half of the suburb located in Lower Manshead. In contrast, the Oxfordshire colour coated sherd distributions are more evidently concentrated in the enclosures adjacent to the modern Norton Road and in the suburb area. It could be concluded from this that although the lower slope concentration of Samian does not continue to be reflected in the distribution of Oxford colour coated sherds, occupational activity continued and intensified throughout the area of the extramural and suburban area during the Roman period. The level of activity quantitatively dramatically increased in the late Roman era particularly in the zone of the suburb.

This late expansion of the suburb is also reflected in the coin distribution of 3rd and 4th century AD issues where identified copies of the former are only half the total for those attributed to the later period. Both centuries are characterised by high levels of inflation, financial turmoil and coin loss so it is unlikely that deposition levels would be widely different and therefore the position as observed must imply greater economic activity in the late Roman occupation.

This is even more apparent when looking at the distribution of the latest coins belonging to the House of Theodosius (388-402 AD), namely the emperors Honorius and Arcadius which, when looking at the loss rate across the wider central area of Bannaventa, appear to be concentrated at two locations within the walled area of the Posting Station itself and to a lesser but significant degree spread in the suburb enclave.



**Photo 6 House of Theodosius coin distribution**

Potentially what we are seeing here is evidence of a completely different interpretation for the latest age of urban life at least in the case of Bannaventa. The traditional view promulgating that small town/posting stations and urban life in general declined rapidly as the 4th century AD progressed whilst on this site based on material consumption and coinage loss the exact opposite appeared to happen.

Parts of the extramural area and most certainly the suburb were enjoying robust development and 'golden age' economies well into the finale days of Roman Britain. The reduction in the size of the small town 'urban' base as evident from the construction of the walled Posting Station didn't devolve into a decline in the extent and economic performance of the wider site hinterland but more clearly led to an intensification of occupation in the extra mural area and a reorganisation and probable expansion of the suburb area. Findings like this could have an important impact on how the social and economic end of Roman Britain is perceived as it illustrates the nature of the variety of experience witnessed in different communities.

I hope by the next newsletter there will be much more to tell you about our overall findings concerning the southern extramural and suburb area of the Posting Station and last year's excavation. The integration of the different survey data combined with our enhanced ability to compare and contrast results allied to the sheer scale of the work undertaken will undoubtedly provide a more detailed context within which to place those and other findings from our recent excavations. More detail should be forth coming in the near future. Again, thanks for your continued support and I hope to see soon in the field or later at the field centre, and don't forget the final Zoom lecture on Bannaventa Southern Extramural & Suburban area in September. This summer's excavation at Manshead is still going ahead and all volunteers will be notified soon of which eight days we will be digging in the target period of the last two weeks in August and first week in September.

Stephen Young



## Further snippets of Thrupp history

A most informative site called "Some notes on medieval English genealogy" has many transcriptions of Northamptonshire resources transcribed by Stephen Swailes. In it there are various references to Thrupp and Norton and the people who inhabited these villages and we can get a flavour of life in those times. In the Abstract of Coroners' Inquests in Northamptonshire in 1351/2, Alice, the wife of John Molendinarius of Thorp iuxta Daventre, was adjudged to have committed suicide after she had struck herself in the stomach with a knife. It was reported that she had lived for three days and had taken communion. The knife was worth a penny. In 1409/10 Thomas Hales de Hilmorton stole three pigs worth twelve shillings from Richard Milward of Throp iuxta Daventre and was found guilty. He was sentenced to hang.

In the Gaol Delivery Rolls for 1409/10, the justices put John Palmere, a chaplain from Ballymore in Ireland, in custody for stealing a "chesible", an "albe", an "amyte", a "toward" and a book called legend worth fifty shillings from Roger Perkyn [and other parishioners] of Throp iuxta Daventre at Throp. What became of John and the stolen goods and whether the people of Thrupp recovered them there is no means of knowing.

Interestingly this is the sole mention of the chapel of St John the Baptist between its foundation in the mid thirteenth century and its decline into a ruinous state in the early sixteenth century.

We know that Daventry Priory built a grange in Thrupp in the late thirteenth century and the negotiations about purchase and exchange are recorded in "The cartulary of Daventry Priory". After this there is no mention of the grange until a certain William Knyght is charged twelve pence for one grange with a garden at Michaelmas 1489. This is a few months after the village had been depopulated by the Prior of Daventry and is recorded in the "Compotus Book, Daventry Priory, 1483-91". The question remains where was the grange situated in Thrupp? In "The cartulary of Daventry Priory" the entries relating to Norton are divided into two main sections and one of them concerns the tenement at the gate of the grange. So it seems logical to locate the grange on the boundary between Thrupp and Norton, the mother parish, where produce from both parts of the parish would have been gathered and stored at a central point.

On 4th May 1489 Thomas Ilston, Prior of Daventry, "caused the tenements there [Thrupp] and the aforesaid hamlet to be levelled to the ground, and deliberately allowed it to be converted and changed from their customary culture and ploughing and sowing for grain there, into pastures for sheep and other animals...and by this means twelve ploughs were put out of use and put down, and the parochial church there was left in desolation nor was any remedy provided, for which reason one hundred persons who until that time had lived in the aforesaid messuages and had been sufficiently occupied in the culture and economy there prior to the fourth of May, left their aforesaid homes in tears

on the said fourth of May and were swiftly led away, so that it may be supposed that they perished in extreme poverty and thus ended their lives." [tr. G.W. Hatton]. Now we might suppose that once the villagers had been expelled that the sheep masters filled the former arable fields with their flocks, but we do not know. There were other people farming in Thrupp at this time. These were the free men who had their strips in the arable fields intermingled with the strips of the Priory tenants.

How did the Priory and these farmers keep the sheep off the arable strips. Did they have fencing or dead hedges or were there sufficient shepherds to keep the animals at bay? We do not know, but we have two references in the Feet of Fines records in 1491 and 1494 which record land transactions in Thrupp, almost five years after Thomas Ilston's actions. In the 1491 transaction Nicholas Catesby, Edward Newenham and William Staverton paid £40 to Thomas Murden and Emma his wife for 2 messuages, 1 garden, 48 acres of land and 12 acres of meadow in Thrupp. On 3rd February 1494, Edward Newenham, Henry Gryffiths, Nicholas Catesby and Thomas Graunte purchased from Richard Wymond and Joan, his wife, and John Fauclyffe, for 100 marks of silver, 5 messuages, 80 acres of land, 20 acres of meadow and 20 acres of pasture in Thrope iuxta Daventre. So the events of 1489 did not end in a clean break and an immediate switch from a mixed economy to a landscape dominated by sheep.

Jim Aveling

In July Jennifer Smith and June Bennett spoke about their memories of "Queen Elizabeth 11 Silver Jubilee" which Harpole celebrated over four days.

Martin Izzard came in August and told us about "Harlestone Manor" and its demise.

In September we should have had a presentation from the "War Graves Commission" , this was cancelled due to the sad passing of our beloved Queen Elizabeth 11.

Alan Clark came in October and spoke about "Glassthorpe", a forgotten village. This is now in Flore parish. In November Michael Brown, spoke about the "Lost Gardens of Northamptonshire"

We all enjoyed a Fish and Chip Supper in December.

January 2023 started off very cold and some of our members chose to stay at home and missed a very interesting talk from Jon Paul Carr "Food, Glorious Food"

Phillip Curtis came in February to speak about the "Vintage Buses" which Northampton Heritage Transport owns. He also showed us many photographs of Northampton in the 1960's. Oh, how we miss those lovely

buildings which are no longer there.

It snowed in March, the speaker was delayed and arrived late then gave a very interesting presentation about "Boughton House" - a house well worth a visit.

Then in April Steven Bruce, an auctioneer, spoke about "Tales from the Auction Room" and valued our members' treasures;

Jennifer Smith. Secretary Harpole Heritage Group

## 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
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
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SUBSCRIPTION REMINDER

Although CLASP's financial year has changed from *1<sup>st</sup> Sept to Aug 31<sup>st</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> April to March 31<sup>st</sup>*, 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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**CLASP**

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 t 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.

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