

# IN THE ARENA

## QUI SCRIPSERINT, TIBI GRATIAS AGIMUS

### **A few words from Helen**

Hello CLASP,

Some of you I have met, but for those of you who don't know me, I have 'volunteered' to gather and collate pieces for the editor.

It was a lovely surprise to swiftly receive reviews, articles, 'dig' reports, those of group visits, pieces of research and advertisements, which made my 'job' so much easier, and really interesting.

I hope you enjoy the variety of contributions in this section. Please keep sending them to me, anything you think may be newsworthy or of interest to fellow members at [helenstamp@sky.com](mailto:helenstamp@sky.com).

Please contribute personal reviews of books, Television series, days out and any other relevant material.

## **THE ROMAN'S HAD A WORD FOR IT...**

### **Norma was alright**

Normal came to English in the 17<sup>th</sup> century from the Latin word *normalis*, meaning at a right angle; it is based on the Romans' use of *norma* for a carpenters' square.

### **The ides of March and all that....**

A certain dictator of Rome was assassinated on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March. It is also the annual date of the new year festival dedicated to Anna Perenna, Roman goddess of renewal, life and the returning year (the Roman year starting in March).

It is from Anna Perenna that we get the word Perennial.

### **The World Wide Web?**

The Latin word for cloth that is woven is *texere* (to weave or to plait). Messages we write and send each day have context, as in they are 'woven together.'

*Texere* is the root word for both text and textile.

Malcolm Smith

## LIBER FASCIAE (THE BOOKSHELF)



**The Dig by John Preston**

**Penguin books**

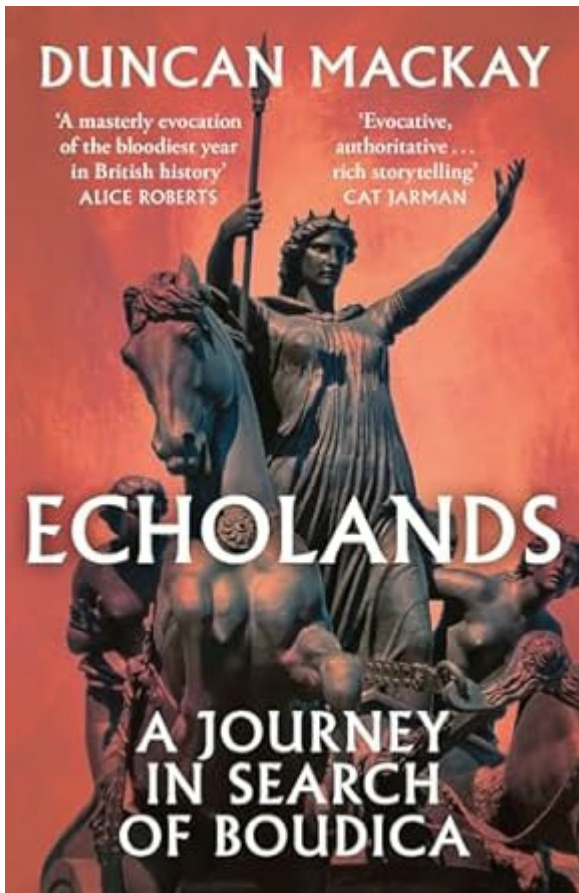
**ISBN 978-0241-98963-0**

John Preston's *The Dig*, the story of the discovery and excavation of the treasures at Sutton Hoo is a really enjoyable read.

Set against the context of the impending and inevitable Second World War. A mere couple of decades after 'The war to end all wars', the story unfolds of various conflicts, one between Mrs Pretty, (who owns the site) and her choice of excavator, amateur Basil Brown, and the opposing professional academics. This is just one of the unhappy relationships explored in the novel.

The story was filmed under the same name and was Academy Award nominated, the film starred Carey Mulligan as Edith Pretty. Ralph Fiennes was Basil Brown and Lily James as Peggy Piggott. Whilst she acted with some of the camera work, I found it a little too 'Hollywood' for me. An enjoyable watch if you have an hour to spare.

Having both read the book and seen the film, I preferred the book as it has 'better pictures'. The Sunday Times calls it 'A delicate evocation of a vanished era.'



Echolands

A journey in search of Boudica

By Duncan Mackay

Hodder & Stoughton

ISBN 978-1-339-71411-2

It so happens that I live a couple of miles from Watling Street, albeit in Hertfordshire rather than Northamptonshire, and so not far away from St Albans and Verulamium, where I recently attended a talk by Duncan Mackay, which prompted me to read his book.

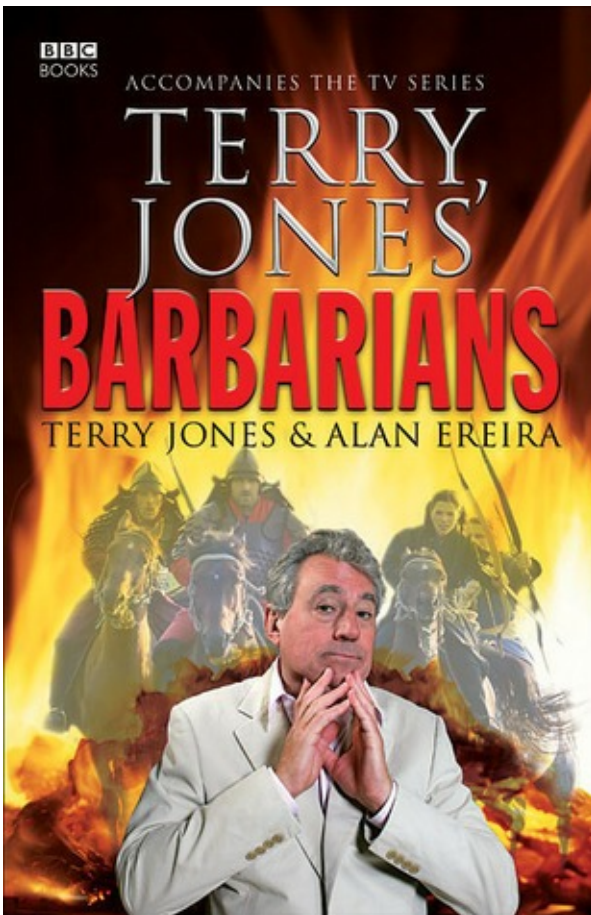
In eleven chapters, Duncan walks and describes this fascinating journey, the landscapes and the nature around him.

Ultimately he takes us back to the year AD 60. Having travelled the length and breadth of England in his quest to find the site of the last battle, when Boudica was defeated and disappears from recorded history.

The book is a good example of a quest undertaken and described in our lovely countryside. I wouldn't reveal his decision as to the whereabouts of the site; as you the reader join him in his final conclusion.

( Both The Dig and Echolands reviewed by Helen Stamp)

*...And now for something completely different*



## **Barbarians**

**An alternative Roman history**

**by Terry Jones & Alan Ereira**

**Ebury Press**

**ISBN 978-0-5635-39162**

An entertaining rewrite of Roman history from the viewpoint of the (no so) barbarians. I thoroughly recommend this book revealing the character assassinations undertaken by Rome and historians through the ages.

Learn about the cultural and technological achievements of the Celts, Goths, Vandals and Persians as Terry and Alan take us through 700 years of history across nthree continents.

Well presented, with a touch of Monty Python.

(Barbarians reviewed by Norman Garnett and Malcolm Smith)

## IN FARO (at the market)



A few Northamptonshire Archaeology books have been given to Don for CLASP, but these volumes already exist at the field study centre.

Any or all of the six books are available free to any CLASP member.

Well worth referencing to learn about archaeology of the county and the sort of objects that can be found in the area.

Enquires to Don Martin.

[rosinabunny@gmail.com](mailto:rosinabunny@gmail.com)



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## WHICH IS YOUR FAVOURITE WOMAN OF VERULAMIUM?



## WOMAN DOING EVERYTHING, EVERYWHERE, ALL AT ONCE

You might be interested to hear about the recent exhibition at Verulamium Museum. In St Albans, which sought to illustrate both the women who excavated there in the 1930's and some of those who had links to the local area 2000 years before.

The exhibition curator believes that neither group achieved the recognition they deserved. She might have a point there.. I've always thought that Tessa Wheeler did far more than husband Mortimer in uncovering Roman Remains.

So, two exhibitions in one, with some interesting extracts from the diary of a schoolgirl who dug there with her mother, also 'dig diaries', letters and a selection of photographs.



We have women from the Roman era; Boudica (of course) and 'Regina' whose cremated bones proved to be a woman buried with arrowheads, 'Flavia' a woman of wealth who made her votive offerings of silver and gold nearby, and 'Sabina' who was associated with the local pottery industry.

It is an unfortunate title for the exhibition in order to hammer home the point. There are lots of well presented articles associated with both periods and plenty of little scenarios for children, including a life size model of Boudica.

Well worth a visit!

Helen Stamp

### **Jennifer Smith sent the following news**

After 25 years the Harpole Heritage Group has sadly closed on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May this year.

Over the years we have had excellent speakers, a number of walks around Harpole and have been welcomed into several of the older houses as well as visiting places of interest in the county.

Some of us have enjoyed working with CLASP members at archaeology sites in Harpole. I have helped at the Whitehall dig, and have represented Harpole on the CLASP Organising Committee for many years.

Unfortunately, CLASP was not involved with finding the 'Harpole Treasure' but we await the outcome of MOLA's investigation.

Harpole Parish Council; have been very generous awarding grants which have helped with our work over the years,

Age has caught up with us, and I will miss you all. I wish CLASP every success in the future.



## Cogenhoe Heritage Society Trip to Chester House

Robert Vaughan Kindly sent me this report on the trip, for the interest of CLASP members. The pictures have been reduced and cut-but you can always contact him for more!

This July Cogenhoe Heritage Society visited Chester House to enjoy a presentation by Professor Sarah Scott, a look at their current archaeological dig and tour the archive.





The BBC news had already featured three complete pots which had been dug out and we were able to see another one, with yet a smaller one inside.





In the Arc we were given a talk to illustrate the types of pottery being found in this area.



Here you can see objects found at Duston. They have been finding similar types around Irchester.

It is classified as Aylesford-Swirling ware, with brown patchy grey colouring dated from early to mid-century AD i.e. pre Roman



Very high end Samian ware from Gaul is also frequently found in Northants (indeed in Cogenhoe) from the mid-first to early third centuries.

This exhibited piece had the potter's mark on the base.



This reconstituted pot is made from South Midlands shelly ware so called because of the inclusion of ground-up shell in the clay.

Large pieces of Lower Nene valley mortaria from mid-second to early fifth century. The gritty rough inner surfaces of the bowl are purposefull to allow foodstuffs to be ground down.

We were then had a conducted tour of finds from the site and finished our visit looking at some of the near 20.000 objects in the collection.





The skeleton here is part of the woolly rhinoceros which once roamed Northamptonshire.–indeed similar parts have been found in gravel digs at Cogenhoe.



A final word from Malcolm.

Firstly please accept my apologies for the first version of this which was distributed. I had problems with Steve's article and concentrating on that I mucked up Arena. It won't happen again.

I wish to thank all those who contributed to this newsletter. I like to think that the Arena is a supplement to the main newsletter.

I'd like to end with a bit of trivia.

'In The Arena' is the title of Charlton Heston's biography. Perhaps Mr Heston's most famous role was that of the lead in 'Ben Hur'.

Ben Hur was written by Lew Wallace; this was his second novel which he completed when he was territorial Governor of New Mexico. Ben Hur was the bestselling American novel of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In 1880 Wallace issued an arrest warrant for William H Bonney (Billy the kid), which led to Sheriff Pat Garret shooting 'The Kid' dead in 1881.

We live in history. .