

NASNEWS

Newsletter of Northamptonshire Archaeological Society

April 2006

COUNTY COUNCIL AXES HERITAGE SERVICE

NAS members will recall that a NASNEWS newsflash went out earlier this year to highlight Northamptonshire County Council's proposed closure of its historic environment service. Sadly, NAS understands that the County Council has confirmed that as part of its restructuring which followed its earlier budget announcements, its Built and Natural Environment service, which includes the Historic Environment Team (formerly known as Northamptonshire Heritage), closed at the end of March 2006.

Most of the existing posts, including the Team Leader (previously referred to as the County Archaeologist), Historic Environment and Conservation officers have been axed. Fortunately, the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) will continue to be maintained by NCC but will in future be managed by Northamptonshire Record Office. As an externally funded post, the Northamptonshire Finds Liaison Officer post will be largely unaffected and will continue with its recording of archaeological artifacts found by metal detectorists and members of the public. These changes involve only the County Council's historic environment 'curatorial' service not the archaeological field unit 'Northamptonshire Archaeology' which will continue to operate as normal. Two new historic environment posts are being created but these will only be concerned with the County Council's strategic planning and work on management of its heritage assets. The County Council intends in future to focus its resources on its core strategic priorities and have a much less active role with Northamptonshire's historic environment. The services which it has previously provided are not statutory and as a result the County Council will no longer provide these.

The role fulfilled by the now defunct team included provision of archaeological advice and guidance to the local District and Borough authorities, developers, land owners and members of the public on planning applications across the county - in line with Government advice. They also set standards for the conduct of archaeological fieldwork undertaken by the myriad of archaeological contractors that operate in the county as well as monitoring their work. Other services included wide ranging advice and guidance to local councils, other organisations and individuals on everything ranging from the impact of new tree planting schemes to the care of individual monuments, historic buildings and landscapes.

NAS is finding it difficult to establish which planning and management advice roles will be maintained by the County Council and which may be picked up by the District and Borough councils. Without such input there will be no means to assess and where appropriate mitigate the impact of new development proposals on archaeology and related heritage. The absence of clearly defined responsibility for such work could be a recipe for disaster with archaeological sites and monuments potentially put at risk of damage or destruction from new development. NAS would encourage members to contact the County Council, West Northamptonshire Development Corporation and their local District and Borough councils to seek assurance that effective measures will be put in place to ensure that their local heritage is taken into account when planning applications are being considered. The extensive new growth planned across the Northamptonshire makes this more important than ever. Without adequate safeguards, the county's archaeological heritage may be in serious danger of sliding into the situation we witnessed before the 1970's with local authorities unable or unwilling to stop the destruction of our past in the face of new development.

FREE BACK NUMBERS OF NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY

The Society has spare back-copies of journals which we would like to give away free to existing members. The copies available are Volumes 9, 26, 27, 29, and 30. If you would like any or all of these, they can be collected from Andy Chapman. Contact him at Northamptonshire Archaeology, 2, Bolton House, Wootton Hall Park, Northampton NN4 9 BE. Tel. 01604 825845. We can also send out copies in the post, but we will have to charge you for postage.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY VOLUME 32 & 33

Volume 32 for 2005 of *Northamptonshire Archaeology* was distributed at the beginning of the year. Preparation of Volume 33 for 2006 is now well under way with publication anticipated later this year or early in 2007.

NAS CHAIR & EDITOR: MARTIN TINGLE

At the NAS AGM in December Martin Tingle announced that he was regretfully standing down from chairing the Society on account of a family move to the West Country. Both Martin and partner Liz rescued the Society Journal from potential oblivion when they moved to Northamptonshire in 1991. The journal, *Northamptonshire Archaeology* has since moved from strength to strength returning to an annual volume of high quality and wide renown. Martin has pioneered many changes in the production of the journal, most recently putting in arrangements to ensure the future availability of the Journal on-line through the CBA's E-journal initiative. In addition to this Martin produced and edited *The Archaeology of Northamptonshire*, a much needed and widely acclaimed review of Northamptonshire's archaeology building on the results of the local archaeological research frameworks process. In so many other ways Martin has kept the Society running – maintaining membership records, co-ordinating committee meetings and much more. The Society owes both Martin and Liz an enormous debt of gratitude. We will sorely miss them both but wish them and their children all the very best wishes in their new ventures!

The good news is that Andy Chapman, NAS Secretary has bravely volunteered to become editor elect and will be shadowing Martin on the production of the next volume in order to get to know the ropes. Roy Friendship Taylor has agreed to stand in as NAS Chair until the next AGM.

30th ANNIVERSARY PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

Applications for this competition closed on 1st January. Members of NAS, of other local societies in Northamptonshire and anyone else with an involvement or interest in the archaeology of Northamptonshire were invited to enter. The competition theme was a record of any aspect of archaeology within Northamptonshire over the last 30 years, be that field survey, excavation, post excavation work, finds, historic landscape, historic buildings, industrial archaeology or any associated event. A wide field but sadly we were not overwhelmed with entries.

After judging by part of the Society Committee just two main prizes were awarded: to David Blackburn for his photos of Duston and Roy Friendship-Taylor for an atmospheric shot of Piddington: congratulations to both.

PORTABLE ANTIQUITIES SCHEME

The Midlands PAS Newsletter No 4, which features amongst other objects, an Iron Age quern from Northamptonshire is now available free from Tom Brindle, Northamptonshire Finds Liaison Officer. Tom can be contacted on 01604 237249 or at tbrindle@northamptonshire.gov.uk

Email: nas@mtingle.freemove.co.uk

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