



NASNEWS

Newsletter of the Northamptonshire Archaeological Society

Website: www.northants-archaeology.org.uk



April 2026

NAS Annual General Meeting Tuesday, 28 October 2025

The following officers were elected by the members present at the AGM:

Andy Chapman: Secretary, Editor and Treasurer

Rob Atkins: Meetings Secretary

Pat Chapman: Membership Secretary

Other members of council:

Mike Curtis, Graham Cadman, Brian Giggins and Sarah Scott.

And Mike Curtis has been reappointed as NAS Chair.

Northamptonshire Archaeology 43, 2026

I have to apologise for having fallen so far behind with bringing the next journal together. I had been hoping to have it out this spring/summer, but clearly that will now not be possible, and it will be an autumn arrival, perhaps for the traditional October/November AGM.

My excuse is that when I offered to take on the task of writing overviews on the Prehistoric Archaeology of Northampton for the Urban Archaeological Database that is being prepared by the Historic Environment Record (HER), funded by Historic England, I hugely underestimated how long it would take. By Christmas I had finished the Mesolithic, Neolithic and Early-Middle Bronze Age. Since the New Year it has then taken just as long to cover

the Late Bronze Age and the Iron Age. Please that I have done it, and certainly a learning experience, on a once only basis.

I will do my best to make it a journal worth waiting for.

Castle Park, Chalk Lane Northampton

Castle Park at Chalk Lane, is a new green space built on part of the historic site of Northampton Castle. Its official opening was a public event held by West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) on Saturday 18 October.

Castle Park is expected to become a much-loved community hub, supporting family days out, local events, school visits, and everyday recreation for generations to come. The park is part of Northampton's wider regeneration programme and has been made possible through £2.27 million in investment, including contributions from the Towns Fund, Section 106 funding, and West Northamptonshire Council.

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/news/new-heritage-park-opens-families-and-residents-northampton>

The Castle Park Heritage Timeline

The West Northants heritage park website page covering the opening of Castle Park (link above) also provides complete coverage of the Heritage Timeline, which appear on 16 educational storyboards, with illustrations, one on each of the upstanding metal posts (see

below) that sweep in an arc following the line of the inner bailey ditch.

Part 1: Where Northampton Began

Part 2: Anglo-Saxon Northampton

Part 3: Earl of Northampton

Part 4: Simon de Senlis

Part 5: The Castle

Part 6: Visitors to the Castle

Part 7: Thomas Becket

Part 8: Royals and the Castle

Part 9: Stories from the Castle

Part 10: Hazelrigg House and the Old
Black Lion

Part 11: The fall of the Castle walls

Part 12: The Great Fire of Northampton

Part 13: Shoe industry

Part 14: Archaeological Excavations

Part 15: Spring Boroughs today

Part 16: Transformation of the park



Castle Park under construction, showing the tall posts that hold the heritage storyboards

The best I can say about the information panels is that, in the words of Douglas Adams, they are 'mostly harmless'. As long as your starting point is a minimal knowledge of the archaeology and history of the town, you will learn quite a lot, much but not all of which is correct, as there are a few inaccuracies and some completely garbled sections where bits of text from different sources have been thrown

together so that the end result is just nonsense.

I am happy with Parts 1 & 2, which have followed my rewrite of the circulated notes: presumably because the various other individuals involved had little interest in, or knowledge of, archaeology and, in particular, anything pre-Norman.

On the other hand, given that it is the Castle Park, the least satisfactory of all the panels is Part 4: Simon de Senlis, which is a classic example of trying to keep everyone happy by putting together conflicting accounts and ending up in a mess: with the Castle Hill mound appearing simultaneously as both 'an early motte', as still argued by some local historians, while simultaneously being built of 'dirt' in the civil war 'to make a gun emplacement to defend the approach to the North Gate of the castle'.

In addition, apparently, 'archaeologists remain divided about [the castles] exact position and size'. Having provided them with a copy of the plan of the castle, as recorded in the 19th century by Henry Dryden and the Law family, and with the more recent excavations added, they choose not to use this at all in a Heritage Park devoted to the castle!

Part 14: Archaeological Excavations, begins well and includes text that I provided and a number of images of the excavations in progress at the site of the new station in 2013. But the second half of the text, and I have no idea where it came from, makes the claim that, 'Evidence was found of a shoe factory that operated on the castle site during World War I, including left over pieces of industrial buildings, tools, and debris relating to the

manufacturing of footwear.' This is a very confident description, but it certainly doesn't apply to my excavations of 2013 on the site of the new station.

A History of Northamptonshire in 100 Objects

Northampton Museum & Art Gallery

This exhibition officially closed on 8 February 2026. The museum says a thank you to everyone who visited, listened, shared, and supported it, and made the exhibition something truly special.

The impact in numbers:

46,085 visitors - a 22% increase compared to 37,768 visitors during the same period last year.

737 books sold of *A History of Northamptonshire in 100 Objects* - now the best-selling book in the shop since reopening in June 2022.

8,200+ podcast listens exploring the 100 Northamptonshire stories.

1.5 million views across the Facebook and Instagram stories.

These numbers tell an amazing story — but the real success has been the conversations, memories, and pride shared by our community. But its legacy lives on:

A History of Northamptonshire in 100 Objects Book: Only £9.99

This beautifully, offering is a perfect keepsake and enduring reference for anyone interested in Northamptonshire's heritage, with each object having a photograph and its story.

Histories of Northamptonshire Website

Explore Northamptonshire's history online through a timeline spanning from the county's earliest geology to the present

day. Each entry features images, stories, and links for further discovery. Scroll through the periods to uncover objects and events, and contribute suggestions for additions to this growing record.

A History of Northamptonshire in 100 Objects Podcast Series

Listen to the voices behind the objects in this 100-episode series. Host John Griff speaks with guest curators, historians, and local residents, revealing each object's story.

This 100-episode podcast series is available on the **Museum YouTube Channel**, along with a special introductory episode, and a final summing up podcast recorded after the end of the exhibition.

St Peter's Church, Northampton

The fragment of Anglo-Saxon cross shaft from the 100 Objects exhibition, is now back on display at St Peter's church, along with other worked stone from the church, and an arrangement of some medieval roof tiles from the 2000-01 excavations at St James' Abbey.

The church is open on Tuesday mornings, 10.00-12.00, while the gardeners are there continuing their excellent work on making the grounds attractive for both visitors and passersby. Unfortunately, there is still no indication when the Old Black Lion may open for business, after its lengthy and very expensive refurbishment.

NASNEWS

Any events or news for the next issue of NASNEWS please forward to:

Andy Chapman, NAS Secretary
(NAS196674@gmail.com)

The Heritage Fair Wicksteed Park

Sunday 26 April, 10am to 4pm

The Heritage Fair is organised by Northamptonshire Heritage Forum (NAS is a member), and it provides a great opportunity to browse the numerous stalls and chat to members of a wide range of heritage and craft organisations from around the county. If you have an interest in archaeology, history or traditional crafts, there are certain to be several stalls of interest.

Entrance is free, but normal Wicksteed Park car parking charges will apply

There are several organisations with a direct link to archaeology, including NAS:
Northamptonshire Archaeological Society
Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre (The ARC)
Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA)
Middle Nene Archaeological Group (MidNAG)

But many others among the 65 exhibitors also have a connection with archaeology and history, or represent craft practices that should be of interest to anyone studying past societies.



HERITAGE FAIR
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE 2026

Sunday 26 April 2026
10am - 4pm

The Pavilion
Wicksteed Park
Kettering NN15 6NJ

There is something for everyone interested in the county's history and heritage

With 65 exhibitors including museums, societies, historic homes, archives, natural history, local history, family history, heritage sites and more!

Discover Centre at Northamptonshire Central Library

Children's Activities
Heritage Buses
Demonstrations

Free entrance
Normal car parking charges will apply

We will be there - come and see us!

Highly Commended in the Northamptonshire Heritage Forum Best Event Awards 2025
A partnership event supported by Wicksteed Park, Northamptonshire Family History Society and Discover Northamptonshire

West Northamptonshire Council

Northampton Museum & Art Gallery

Abington Park Museum

For more information scan the QR code

Discover Northamptonshire
CULTURE · TOURISM · HERITAGE

Northamptonshire Family History Society
1974 50 2024

WICKSTEED PARK
SINCE 1921

Some recent events

The Battlefields Trust

(from Facebook)

Simon Marsh and Graham Evans from the Battlefields Trust went to Edgcote battlefield (24 July 1469, during the Wars of the Roses) to see the new information boards they have just had installed. These are a joint project of NBS, BT and the Wills Estate who own most of the registered battlefield land. The three new boards replace the previous single BT board that will be inaccessible due to HS2, as well as being out of date following research done by the Society. Thanks go to Hamish Gairdner at the Wills Estate, who made contact with us back in 2023 at a talk in Towcester. This paved the way for installing the boards and he helpfully sorted out the required planning permissions. Thanks also to Ben, who did the installation work and showed us round today. We were pleased to hear that walkers and cyclists have already been spotted reading the boards. And of course, a big thankyou to Graham Turner - Artist who allowed us to use two of his illustrations on the boards.



Celebrating 150 years of Northamptonshire Natural History Society

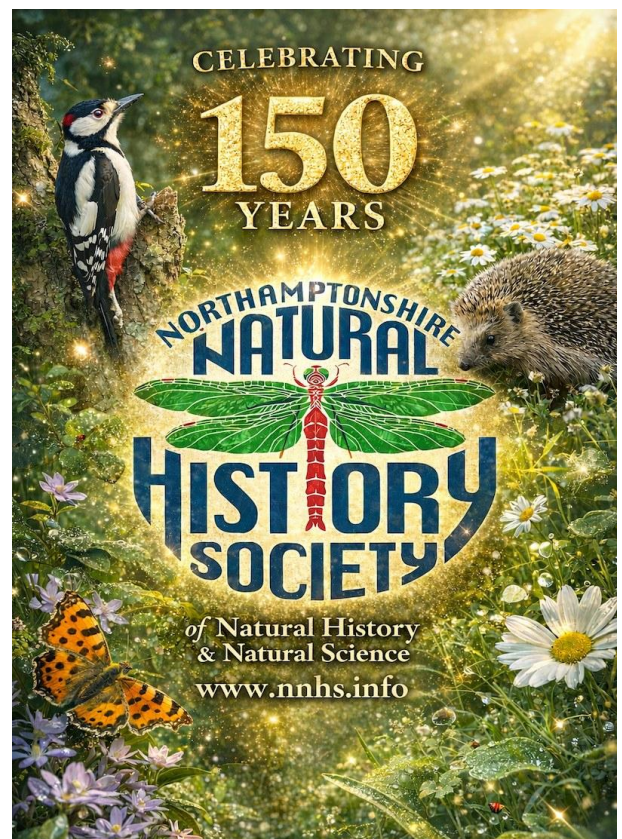
(from Facebook)

150 years of discovery: From Darwin's theory of evolution transforming our understanding of life, to the discovery of DNA unlocking its code... From early geological studies revealing Earth's deep history, to powerful telescopes opening up the universe... Through it all, our passion for natural history and natural science in Northamptonshire has never stood still.

Today, that curiosity is still thriving in the heart of Northampton - and you can be part of it.

Join a friendly community of people who love to learn, explore, and share ideas.

To become a member go to: www.nnhs.info



Forthcoming events

**CBA South Midlands
Earls Barton Archaeology Day**
Saturday, 9 May 2026
Methodist Church,
Earls Barton

Poster with full programme and
booking details attached to
NASNEWS

Programme:

Iron Age and Roman settlement and a
Bronze Age ring ditch at Main Road, *Mike
Luke, Albion Archaeology*

Digging with Deeds: exploring the use of
deeds as a source in modern settlement
development, *Hilary Hillman*

Bartone: a Late Anglo-Saxon burh, *Martin
Wilson, Souterrain Archaeological
Services (SAC)*

Unveiling Mercer's Farm: recent
discoveries in centre of Earls Barton,
Mercedes Planas, SAC

Beyond the church tower: the origins of
Earls Barton's lordly centre, *Duncan
Wright, Newcastle University*

Visit to All Saints' Church, including a talk,
access to the Saxon tower, and a tour of
the churchyard.

**Stanwick Lakes
From Iron to Empire
Heritage Build Weekends
2026**

Sat, 30 May, 10am - Sun, 31 May, 5pm
Sat, 4 July, 10am - Sun, 5 July, 5pm



**At Stanwick Lakes you can watch the
volunteers and experts as they
undertake ambitious heritage build
projects exploring the history of the
Nene Valley!**

From the construction of a replica Roman
kiln, heritage gardens and ancient textiles,
there will be plenty to see as work begins
on these exciting projects.

The Big Bronze Age Boat Build returns! To
protect our boats and continue our legacy,
volunteers will be designing and building a
wooden jetty, Bronze Age style!

This project is supported by the National
Lottery Heritage Fund, with thanks to
Lottery players.

Free event. Usual parking charges apply.

The Chester House Estate Heritage Workshops

Coming up throughout May, we have a fantastic range of Heritage Workshops for you to experience & enjoy. These are a chance for you to step back in time - and guided by Archaeological Crafting specialists to learn the history and have a go at making your own unique items!

The range of workshops cover the following:

Medieval Book Binding Workshop
Roman Jewellery Workshop
Roman Bone Working Workshop
Roman Leather Bag Workshop
Everything you make, you get to take home with you

For full details on the dates and times of each workshop - plus to book your tickets just follow the link below. All workshops have limited spaces for each session and usually sell out quickly - so early booking is recommended:

<https://chesterhouseestate.org/whats-on/heritage-workshops/>



The Chester House Estate Roman Fest, 25-26 July

The Romans return for an action-packed day for the whole family



ROMAN FEST



Roman army displays. - Roman crafts and demonstrations - Stalls with family friendly activities run by museums, local societies and professional archaeologists from Northamptonshire and beyond - The Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre Open Day - Tours of our excavation - A pop up Laboratory run by University of Leicester School of Archaeology and Ancient History - Art exhibition inspired by the Roman World by students at Northampton College.

Admission is FREE for the whole family, but please ensure that you prebook your free tickets so that we can manage numbers for this very popular, previously sold-out event.

If you are able to, you can also make a £5 donation when getting your tickets. Your support helps bring local history to life - this donation will help us to continue delivering free heritage events like this in the future.

<https://chesterhouseestate.org/whats-on/roman-fest-2026/>

Exhibition

The SAXONS

Three lives

Three burial sites

Three extraordinary stories

28 March - 1 November 2026

The SAXONS is a major new

IMMERSIVE EXHIBITION

at Discover Bucks Museum,

Aylesbury

Exploring Buckinghamshire's Saxon past through extraordinary archaeological discoveries.

Step into early medieval life as you encounter:

The Princely Burial at Taplow,

The Warlord of Marlow,

and artefacts from 122 graves at the

Wendover Saxon Cemetery.

With immersive displays, life-like Saxon characters, and hands-on experiences for families, this exhibition brings Saxon history vividly to life.

Discover more here:

<https://www.discoverbucksmuseum.org/whats-on/the-saxons-an-immersive-exhibition-in-buckinghamshire/>

This certainly looks like it will be worth a trip to Aylesbury to see how they are finding new ways to present finds to a wider audience.

Recent publication

The Medieval Pilgrim: The Roads to Salvation

by Michael Brown

Pen & Sword History

Hardback, pages: 216

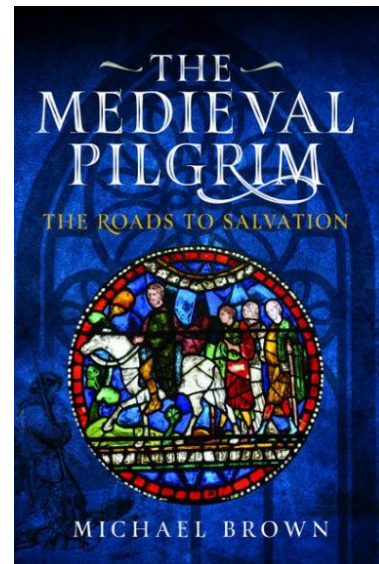
Illustrations: 80 mono illustrations

ISBN: 9781036101237

Published: 30 May 2026

£14.00: Introductory Offer in advance of publication from Pen & Sword:

RRP £20.00



This book explores the stories of the people who went on pilgrimage. Where did they go? What inspired them to make the journey? What hardships would they endure on the way? What would they experience when they arrived at their destination. Would there be miracles? and how would their life be changed when they returned home. The history of pilgrimage is the story of people, their hopes and fears, in this life and the next.

Michael researched and designed the medieval gardens at the **Prebendal Manor, Nassington**, and he lectures on early gardens, gardening and plants. His previous three books were related to gardening and plants: *Death in the Garden* (2018), *A Guide to Medieval Gardens* (2022) and *Medieval Plants and their Uses* (2023). They are all highly recommended.

Earls Barton Archaeology Day

Saturday 9th May 2026

Methodist Church, 36 Broad St, Earls Barton, Northamptonshire NN6 0ND



- 10:00 Tea, coffee and biscuits
- 10:20 Welcome
- 10:25- **Iron Age and Roman settlement and a Bronze Age ring ditch at Main Road**
10:45 Mike Luke, Albion Archaeology
- 10:50- **Digging with Deeds: exploring the use of deeds as a source in modern**
11:50 **settlement development.** Hilary Hillman
- 12:00 Lunch
- 13:00- **Bartone: a Late Anglo-Saxon burh**
13:45 Martin Wilson, Souterrain Archaeological Services
- 13:55- **Unveiling Mercer's Farm: recent discoveries in centre of Earls Barton**
14:40 Mercedes Planas, Souterrain Archaeological Services
- 14:50 Tea and coffee
- 15:20- **Beyond the church tower: the origins of Earls Barton's lordly centre**
15:40 Duncan Wright, Newcastle University
- 15:45 Visit to All Saints' Church, including a talk, access to the Saxon tower, and a tour of the churchyard
- 17:00 Close




Earls Barton Archaeology Day

Saturday 9th May 2026

Booking Arrangements

Tickets cost £20 for members of CBA South Midlands and its affiliated organisations (see the list at <https://cbasm.archaeologyuk.org>), £25 for non-members, and £15 for those in higher education.

Bookings for the conference close at 12pm on Wednesday 6th May. There are three ways to book:

- 1) Online: follow our Ticket Tailor link
<https://www.tickettailor.com/events/councilforbritisharchaeologysouthmidlands/2063303>

Ticket Tailor website
- 2) BACS: make your payment to “Council for British Archaeology South Midlands”, account no. 00333999, sort code 20-00-87 (Barclays). Please use your surname as your booking reference, and e-mail David Ingham at dp.ingham@albion-arch.com with your attendees’ names and to state whether you have any dietary restrictions for lunch.
- 3) Cheque: send the form below and a cheque to ‘CBA South Midlands’ to David Ingham, 21 Oak Tree Drive, Bedale, North Yorkshire DL8 1UL. I suggest also letting me know of your booking by text/e-mail (see bottom of page) in case of postal delays. An e-mail address, phone number or SAE will be required for acknowledgement of your booking.

Please reserve place(s) at the members’ rate of £20.

Please reserve place(s) at the non-members’ rate of £25.

Please reserve place(s) at the student rate of £15 for those in higher education.

Enclosed is a cheque for payable to CBA South Midlands.

A buffet lunch is included in the ticket price. Tick below if you have any of the following dietary restrictions:

Vegetarian Vegan Gluten-free Dairy-free

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY BELOW IN BLOCK CAPITALS.

Name(s)

Address

Telephone and e-mail

Affiliated organisation (if applicable)

Any queries should be addressed to David Ingham: 07717 866767 / dp.ingham@albion-arch.com