



NASNEWS

Newsletter of the Northamptonshire Archaeological Society

Website: www.northants-archaeology.org.uk



April 2020

A Word from the Chair

Welcome to this second spring edition of the NAS newsletter. On behalf of the NAS committee we hope that this newsletter finds you and your families safe and well in these challenging times.

I am opening this newsletter as the new Chair of NAS for 2020. For those members who have not met me over the years, I have been actively involved in British archaeology for well over 40 years and in this time I have seen many changes. I live in Wellingborough and am a landscape and coastal archaeologist. Some of you will best know me from the Chester Farm excavations and when not out in the field I spend a lot of my time in Leicester where I am a doctoral researcher at the School of Archaeology & Ancient History.



Michael on Crete with Greek Ministry archaeologists

As well as working in the UK, I am actively involved in research and project work on Crete, Greece. I have been lecturing and writing about Hellenistic and Roman Crete since the early 1990s but my attention in recent years has become more focussed on the lost harbours of the Hellenistic and

Roman periods. I am a founding partner in an international collaborative project that is currently investigating one of the largest Roman harbours on the island.

It has become customary within NAS for each new Chair to have a couple of aims for their time in office so I would like to begin by encouraging members who would like to be more involved in NAS to consider putting themselves forward for sitting on the Committee. New faces and new ideas are always welcome and with the likelihood of change in the political map of the county, ensuring that our Committee membership is properly balanced across the county is going to be even more important. I agree that Committee membership is not for everyone, but with meetings only 3 or 4 times a year I can promise that being a Committee member is not overbearing and if you are interested then I would urge you to write to our Secretary, Andy Chapman.

The second matter that I would like to raise relates to excavations and finds that remain unpublished. Throughout the county there are excavation projects that have not been published. In these situations, excavation notes, drawings and sometimes the finds, often remain in private hands with the risk that they will eventually be lost.

The opening of a new county archive (*see later in the newsletter, Ed*) provides an opportunity for those in charge of these past excavations to get things in order and to deposit the finds and records in a proper manner so that future generations may have a chance to study them. Several of the known sites in this category contain important strategic evidence that could influence, help

our understanding and dating of other sites within the county. Their absence from the county's archaeological record is a matter for concern. For excavators with unpublished material, NAS can offer the possibility of publication in our journal and possibly financial help with the professional drawing of plans and sections in preparation for publication through the small grants fund, so I would ask you to please consider this.

In ending this short piece, I would like to thank all members who have contributed to this edition of our newsletter and I hope that you will find it interesting reading.

Michael J Curtis, Chair NAS

Pat Foster

In January, the family of Patrick Foster posted the news on Facebook that Pat had passed away following his long battle with cancer, which Pat had recorded on his Facebook posts together with a stream of interesting and thought provoking new items, often marking his despair at the current state of the world.

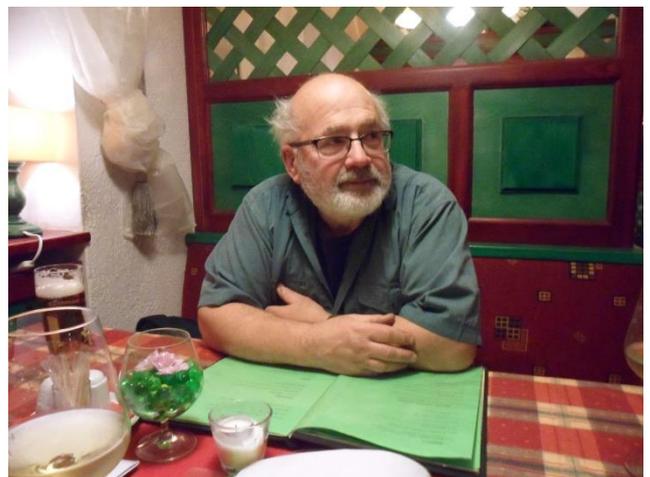
His family wrote:

"To all friends, colleagues, relatives and everybody who would want to know, Patrick passed away today in the morning. He died at home, peacefully, and with his loving wife at his side. Try not to be sad. Join us in thoughts and celebration of one long, full and wonderful life."

Pat Foster died on the 17 January 2020 and his funeral was on the 25 January.

Pat played a significant part in recording Northamptonshire's archaeology over many years and was a long-standing member of NAS.

He was born in Kettering in 1942 attending the Henry Gotch school and then Kettering Technical College. From there he was conscripted into the Royal Artillery.



Pat Foster 1942 - 2020

On leaving the army he worked for the Kettering Tyre Company rising to senior management. However, it may have been time in the army on the Scottish islands that sparked his deep interest in the natural world and archaeology. He learnt the skills of archaeology working with his great friend Dennis Jackson and became a superb excavator and also a very good archaeological illustrator.

Without Pat's work a notable amount of archaeological knowledge would have been lost. An example of his work and dedication can be seen recorded in the Society's Journal volume 7 under Wellingborough (SP 89206945) "This site was found on 13th July 1971 while checking road scraping working in the evenings and at weekends R Harper and P Foster recorded and excavated a number of features..."

Pat recorded a large number of sites authoring or co-authoring articles and notes in the journal from 1972 to 2000.

Pat worked with many people still active within the archaeology of the county, who have fond memories of him ...

"Both he and Dennis introduced me to practical archaeology, and I look back fondly to the times I joined both of them on sites around Corby. At that period, I remember that he was working as a manager of a tyre fitting depot but it was archaeology that

dominated his interests. His enthusiasm for the subject was infectious and I have not seen his speed with a trowel repeated! I owe both of them a debt of gratitude".

Brian Giggins

"Pat has been ill for some time and anticipating this for at least a year. Pat Foster took me under his wing and introduced me to the Northamptonshire Field Group when I was new to the area. This led to many happy and exciting projects with Pat, Burl Bellamy and Dennis over a period of 30 years. Pat then left the country to live in Czech Republic where he continued his archaeological career until the end of his life. I am grateful for everything he taught me and remember him for his generosity his enthusiasm and his energy."

Gill Johnston

Chester Farm 2019

May and June 2019 saw the first collaborative excavation between the County Council and the University of Leicester. The intention is for the University to use Chester Farm as the training site for its First Year and Distance Learning students, enabling the County Council to run its community excavation in parallel. Sadly, it has been necessary to cancel the joint excavation with the University planned for this summer because of Coronavirus. Hopefully it will be possible to put all this planning into action next year, but meanwhile, it is useful to reflect on the successes of last summer.

Work was continued within the former orchard area associated with the main Chester Farm house. This was already known to be the site of a Roman burial area and previous excavations had recorded 32 burials that, apart from one notable decapitated example, all lay supine and aligned west to east.



The 2019 excavations



The Roman side road (top of photo) and a Roman building cut by a post-medieval building and drain (foreground)

The focus of the excavation last summer was therefore on trying to complete the excavation of the burials and to start the exploration of a section of a Roman side road that ran through what is now the orchard. In the first area, a further 32 burials were revealed and lifted. These included many children and babies all carefully arranged and some graves in which skeletons appeared to overlie each other. It also contained burials

within stone cists while others had only isolated limestones placed around the body; none included any form of surviving grave goods. There was also an area of surviving Roman soil that was masking the grave cuts.

It appears to have been a managed burial ground, possibly dating to the late Roman period and perhaps including Christian burials. However, as this is one of several burial areas that might prove to be 'sub-Roman', from the years following the Honorian edict, it is best not to make assumptions. We are hoping in the future to carry out some scientific dating to try to resolve this question. In addition to the burials a series of enclosure and roadside ditches were examined and in two instances substantial dumps of pottery were recovered.

A second area revealed part of the limestone metalled side road, flanked on its eastern side by a Roman stone-founded building; presumably, a standard strip building. The exciting thing was that this building was cut through by a later stone building with an internal drain that produced a coin of post-medieval date. This building is assumed to be part of the original post-medieval farm complex, but it was not shown on the well-known estate plan of 1756 and must have been erected and demolished prior to that period.



The joy of a summer dig in England!

Overall the dig provided lots of opportunities for many new and established volunteers to engage with archaeology and learn about Chester Farm in the Roman period especially, and produced lots of Roman pottery as

expected. The weather led to lots of waterlogged trenches but everyone had plenty of fun!

Ian Meadows

The Archaeological Resource Centre Curator

More from Chester Farm, with the good news that an archaeological archives curator has been appointed to the county's brand-new repository. Here Ben Donnelly Symes introduces himself and the ARC:

Hello, I have recently been appointed to the position of Archaeological Archives Curator for the new Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre (ARC) based at Chester Farm, Irchester. Previously I worked in a similar position in Cambridgeshire where I curated the county's archaeological archives as part of the Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team.



Ben Donnelly-Symes

The ARC, which is expected to be open to the public in late 2020, will be the archaeological archive repository for Northamptonshire. The archives held at the ARC will be fully accessible to the public and will be able to be used for archaeological research; whether that is to further understand a particular archaeological site, the archaeology of specific parish or town or for the study of artefact and material types.

I am currently in the process of assessing and preparing 12,000 boxes of legacy archives for their move from existing stores to the new ARC building. The contents of all these boxes will be catalogued and around 9,000 will require some element of re-packaging in order to bring them up to modern archival standards. I am also expecting around 4,000 boxes of archaeological archives to be deposited by professional archaeological units within the first few years of the ARC opening. We have recently published our new standards for the deposition of archaeological archives with the ARC. These standards can be found on the council website at:

www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/archaeological-archive.

We will be actively looking to recruit volunteers to help with the re-packaging and cataloguing of these archives in the coming months so watch this space! In the meantime, if you have any queries then please do not hesitate to get in touch at:

ARC@Northamptonshire.gov.uk

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A new archaeology society for Brigstock

A new group, The *Brigstock Archaeology Group* (BAG), has just been started. They aim to find out more about Brigstock's past by undertaking both fieldwork (including fieldwalking and test pitting), and research.



The group is open to everyone, whatever their level of experience, and full details are available on their website - (which I would heartily recommend visiting as it is one of the most dynamically designed examples I've seen in a while!).

<https://www.brigstockarchaeologicalgroup.co.uk/>

Tracking council owned ancient & historical sites, monuments and buildings

Last year, as plans were being made to divide the county and create a new political map, I put a Freedom of Information request to each council across the county to enquire which ancient and historical monuments and buildings they were responsible for and what their policy was with regards to maintenance.

In all the heat of the political debate I was curious to see how they regarded these monuments and buildings and, perhaps more important, if they actually knew what they were responsible for. The latter point proved to be particularly important, as played out in the subsequent telephone calls that I received. In fairness, most council's knew where their responsibilities lay, but some clearly did not and worryingly had to do some research before responding to my request.

Overall the response proved to be very interesting revealing a mixture ranging from large buildings like Delapre Abbey (Northampton Borough Council) to dovecotes (for example Cranford St Andrew and Orlingbury dovecotes, Northamptonshire CC),

mills (for example Towcester Mill, South Northamptonshire Council), cemetery chapels (for example Kingsthorpe Cemetery Chapel, Northampton Borough Council and Kettering Cemetery Chapel, Kettering Borough Council), farmhouses (for example Rectory Farm, Northampton Borough Council), stable blocks (East Carlton Country Park, Corby Council), barns (for example Bradlaugh Fields, Northampton Borough Council), art galleries (for example Alfred East Art Gallery, Kettering Borough Council) and shops (for example 57 High Street, Corby Old Village, Corby Council). Ancient monuments, though considerably fewer in number, ranged from sites like Borough Hill, on the eastern side of Daventry (Daventry District Council), Bury Motte (South Northamptonshire Council) to a section of Roman road at Hazelwood part of Gartree Road, in Corby (Corby Council).



Cranford St Andrew, Dovecote

Sadly, the responses to my question on maintenance showed that the majority of councils had a low regard towards upkeep, maintaining basic annual repair programmes, or in other words 'as and when needed'.

It will be interesting to see how the new unitary councils approach the transfer of these monuments and buildings, and how they will fit into the wider issue of countywide heritage management. Northamptonshire has a rich archaeological and historical heritage which has been hugely undervalued by the current County Council. Let us hope that sight

of this does not get lost within all the political wrangling's that lie ahead.

Michael J Curtis

NAS Grants

The NAS Committee, which met in January, has approved a £500 grant application for the project: *Northamptonshire: Becoming Christian in Midland Britain AD 500-1050*. The project director is Professor Emeritus Susan Pearce Macmillan from Leicester University.

The project's aim is to produce a unique, searchable, database, which will provide comprehensive, consistent and detailed local information about parish churches and related sites in Northamptonshire and the other counties. It will enable research to be carried out on how the shire became Christian and the character of that Christianity.

This database will use archaeological, historical, architectural and place-name evidence and be structured by site. Each record will have 31 fields, embracing a total of 350 criteria, all of which can be used to create searches.

It is hoped that this database will benefit a wide range of people including archaeologists, local historians and teachers.

The project's aim is to cover all 14 midland counties by 2025 with work already in progress in five counties: Leicestershire and Rutland are nearly finished, whilst Warwickshire and Herefordshire are well advanced. The work on Worcestershire has just started.

For Northamptonshire the work will be carried out by Dr Michael Hawkes, based at Leicester University. The NAS grant will allow him largely to complete the Northamptonshire Access table.

Eventually the database will be freely accessible on the Archaeological Data Services (ADS) website.

Current Archaeology LIVE!

Northamptonshire was well represented at the 2020 *Current Archaeology* Awards with Roy Friendship-Taylor securing a nomination for Archaeologist of the Year, and a recent book by MOLA on the Wollaston, Pioneer Burial being nominated for Book of the Year. Sadly, neither walked away with an award but it was an exciting night, nonetheless.

The *Current Archaeology* LIVE conference is an annual event organised by the magazine which this year was held at the University of London's Senate House on 28-29 February.

Roy Friendship-Taylor's nomination was garnered for his amazing work at Piddington Villa. As many of you know, Roy has also served on the NAS Committee for many years. Roy began work as a graphic designer in London. He later took a Diploma in Archaeology at the University of Leicester, and later still an MPhil in Archaeology at the University of Nottingham reporting on Roman Channel Rim Jars (published later as a BAR monograph). He has directed excavations by Upper Nene Archaeological Society (UNAS) for over four decades, including the 1970s excavations at Quinton, published within the *Journal of Northampton Museum* series. But perhaps he is best known for directing the long running excavations at Piddington Roman villa which have been going since 1979. The project has uncovered an Iron Age and Roman settlement, part of a probable Roman fort and of course the villa itself. UNAS bought the local Wesleyan chapel in Piddington, converting it into a museum in order to display the project's finds, as well as housing research and educational facilities.

The ultimate winner of the award, however, was Dr Alison Sheridan recently retired

Principal Archaeological Research Curator at National Museums Scotland.

Ian Meadow's book: *The Pioneer Burial: a high-status Anglian warrior burial from Wollaston*, was featured in our May 2019 Newsletter. Against stiff competition, it was eventually beaten to the award by *Life and death in the countryside of Roman Britain*, by Alexander Smith, Martyn Allen, Tom Brindle, Michael Fulford, Lisa Lodwick, and Anna Rohnbogner, the final volume in the *New Visions of the Countryside of Roman Britain* series.

Centre for English Local History: Marc Fitch House

Dr Michael Gilbert (Chair of the Friends of the Centre for English Local History) has posted on the CELH website that the University of Leicester has decided to sell the building and to relocate the Centre to the Attenborough Tower on the main campus by the start of July 2020. Dr Gilbert's full posting with the background to the move can be found at:

<http://www.englishlocalhistory.org/wp/2020/02/29/closure-of-marc-fitch-house/>

Fieldwork

Details of summer excavations were sent to us prior to the COVID-19 lockdown. We have included them in this newsletter because, if nothing else, it keeps us hopeful that things may have settled down later in the year and we may be able to venture outside again with our trowels! However, of course, please make sure that you check with the organisers to see if or when they are taking place.

CLASP Excavations

CLASP, the community based archaeological charity centred in the west of the county, has two excavations programmed for this year, the early Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Nether Heyford and the southern extremity of the area of the Romano-British town of Bannaventa to the east of Daventry.

The precise dates of these excavations are dependent upon when the crops are lifted, but we anticipate they will be during the period from the beginning of August until early September.

Full details of confirmed dates will be published on the CLASP website www.claspweb.org.uk

To participate in these excavations, or any other CLASP activity, non-members must join CLASP at a cost of £10 per annum. Membership can be taken out on the CLASP website.

Nene Valley Archaeological Trust

NVAT will be digging for four weeks within the walled area of the Roman town of *Durobrivae*, but dates have still to be fixed.

The best way to find details is to visit the NVAT web site where all details will be posted. Last year NVAT again dug for a month and had two very successful open days, all organised through this web site: <https://www.nenevalleyarchaeology.co.uk/>

If you want more details, please contact: stephenupex@hotmail.com

MidNAG Excavations

The Roman landscape project at Nassington will this year concentrate on finishing the excavation of a Roman building and its surrounds. We are all set to do another season, 15-29 August, and will be advertising for volunteers on the web site before Easter and would welcome additions. There will be an

Open Day on the 23 August, 11am to 3pm.

Contact Gill Johnston,
agjohnston1941@hotmail.com
or on the web site www.MidNAG.org.uk

Archaeology in lockdown

Just like everyone else at the moment, archaeologists are finding ways of communicating digitally during the lockdown. Many museums, societies and archaeological companies have been posting examples from their collections or providing content and resources online. The CBA have done a great job of pulling together a list of some these which can be found at:

<http://blog.archaeologyuk.org/2020/03/24/archaeology-resources-hub/>

And of course, there is also our own Facebook page which we can use to keep in touch with the Society during the lockdown. If you come across any archaeological resources that you think might be of interest perhaps you could send them in to Andy (see below)?

AND FINALLY.....

News items of interest are also posted on the NAS Facebook page. If you have any items you would like to include there contact:

Andy Chapman

NAS secretary and journal editor
NAS email: NAS196674@gmail.com

If you have any news or information that you would like included in the next NAS newsletter then please contact:

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