



NASNEWS

Newsletter of the Northamptonshire Archaeological Society

Website: www.northants-archaeology.org.uk



April 2021

A Message from the Chair

Welcome to this Spring newsletter. Like many others, I find that time just seems to pass by in lockdown and it is hard to conceive that one year ago I had just arrived in Crete to organise a conference on coastal archaeology. It was a journey that was to be short-lived, and a conference that has yet to be held, as I was soon recalled back to the UK, leaving the island on one of the last flights before the Greek lockdown.

I wanted to open this Spring newsletter with the welcome news of progress on what used to be known as the Chester Farm project. As many of you are probably aware, this Northamptonshire County Council project has been in a start-stop mode for several years and many, like NAS, have been concerned that the plans would not reach completion. In recent months, and in time for the change in the county's political landscape, the entire project has been rebranded and is now called The Chester House Estate (<https://chesterhouseestate.org/>).

The rebranding has been accompanied by an ambitious business plan which has featured widely in the media in recent weeks. The plan, and the proposed organisation structure, reflect a significant change in the direction of this project and represent a far more commercial approach, utilising the historical setting of the old farmhouse and its associated buildings to generate the needed financial funds to manage and run the operation. Coming at a time when there is likely to be even more pressure on public finances, without the disruption resulting from the move to new unitary councils or Covid, it is good to see that the project is well advanced in attracting collaborative

partners. The stability of this project, especially with regards to the future funding of the new county archaeological resource centre (now called NARC), has been something of concern for some time, and this part of the project is especially important since so much of the county's rich archaeological heritage is currently scattered from one end of the country to the other, or even lies outside Northamptonshire. I am sure that NAS members will join with me in wishing the management team well in their work as we all look forward to the public opening of the Chester House complex later in the year.

This is normally a time of year when we would set out information on the various community projects running in the summer months. With so much uncertainty as to how our summer may look it is hardly surprising that we have little news to share with you as yet. I know from my conversations with NAS members that many are keen to get back in the field, whether it is to research or to participate in fieldwork, and I hope that the relaxation of the restrictions will allow some events to take place during the remainder of the year. We will certainly endeavour to keep you informed when we hear of these activities as the year progresses.

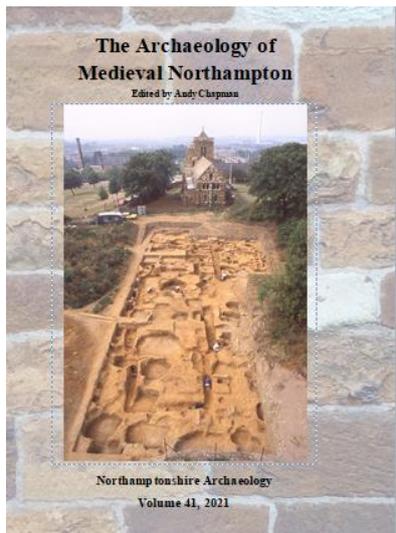
Stay safe and well.

Michael J Curtis. Chair

Northamptonshire Archaeology, 41

Work on the long promised Medieval Northampton special edition of the journal is continuing, and my aim is to have it printed and available later this year, by around October/November. This should be in time for our AGM, although plans for that meeting

can only be made as the route out of the pandemic becomes clearer over the coming months.



Andy Chapman, Journal editor

Developing a Programme of NAS online talks

One of the more positive sides of lockdown this past year has been the opening up of access to online talks and presentations on a range of subjects, including local history and archaeology. It seems odd to think that one year ago many people, myself included, would not have heard about online conference and meeting platforms like Zoom, but these have gone from being business tools to platforms that some of us are now using every day. As part of our planning for the forthcoming year, the NAS Committee have been discussing setting up a programme of online talks. Whilst we have many ideas on this, we thought it would be useful if we could invite you to put forward some suggestions on the topics and people that you would be interested to see included in our programme. As this is a new direction for NAS it would also be helpful if you could also guide us on any preferences that you have for days of the week and the evenings that would be more convenient to you.

So, please send me your ideas and we will certainly consider them. Email the chair: mikecurtis1956@yahoo.co.uk

Overstone Gate, Northampton

A Northamptonshire archaeological site made both the local and national news recently. MOLA's excavations at Overstone Gate, on behalf of developers David Wilson Homes, revealed the largest Anglo-Saxon cemetery ever found in the county.

Although the inhumations, with their extensive grave goods, made the headlines, the archaeological significance of the site perhaps lies with the fact that the cemetery was associated with a settlement of 22 structures, a mixture of sunken-feature buildings and post-built structures. A further 20 structures were found dispersed across the site, associated with field systems. This conjunction of domestic with funerary is again unique for the county (at least on this scale) and has the potential to enhance our understanding of the period.

Based on initial inspection of the grave-goods it seems that the cemetery is largely (although not exclusively) 6th century in date. However, more detailed analysis of the finds is now under way and this, along with scientific dating, will be able to confirm and refine this view. The grave goods comprised nearly 3,000 artefacts. Jewellery was the most prevalent and included roughly 150 brooches, 15 rings, 75 wrist clasps, 15 chatelaines, and over 2,000 beads. Weapons were also common discoveries with 25 spears, and 15 shield bosses recovered, along with 40 knives. More everyday items were also discovered such as cosmetic kits and bone combs, and, most excitingly, some rare bits of textile survived, mineralised next to metal objects.

A range of domestic items, including a pottery assemblage which may prove to be one of the most important of this period from the county, were also recovered. In addition to the Anglo-Saxon discoveries, prehistoric features were also present, including three Bronze Age round barrows and 46 prehistoric burials (radiocarbon dating

shows that the earliest dates to 2000-1900 BC) within four Bronze Age timber structures. On their own, these prehistoric discoveries would be of great interest, but combined with the Anglo-Saxon finds they offer the opportunity to study the use of a Northamptonshire landscape over millennia.

Council for British Archaeology South Midlands Group

There is no plan as yet to reschedule the two annual conferences CBA South Midlands had been organising up to the outbreak of the pandemic, although there is an outside chance that the autumn conference (planned for Northamptonshire) might go ahead. More likely, is that the conferences will start again in spring 2022 with the first based in Oxfordshire and the Northamptonshire conference following in the autumn. Last year's South Midlands Archaeology has been published and is available now. Information for this year's journal should be sent to Nick Crank: [nacrank01@gmail.com](mailto:nacranc01@gmail.com) Further details of CBA activities are on their website:

<https://www.archaeologyuk.org/cbasml/>

Local Society News

As Mike has said, community projects have been hard hit by Covid and there is naturally little in the way of fieldwork to report. However, it is good to see that all local archaeological societies are resolutely keeping going one way or another. We contacted eight societies to see what they were proposing to do in 2021. Five responded and information for the others was obtained from their websites or Facebook pages.

Brigstock Archaeological Group (BAG)

Peter Walker wrote to say that BAG is a new group formed in 2019, and they had only been going a couple of months when the pandemic hit - so it is still very early days for them. BAG is a core of interested volunteers who would certainly be interested in hearing from

other potential volunteers. BAG's Facebook group (see below) would be the best place for non-members to keep an eye on what's upcoming and there should be some new posts going up over the next couple of weeks. They are keen to run a 'Big Dig' event in the future, when conditions allow.

Recently, however, BAG has mostly been focused on securing permissions for fieldwalking, working around the needs/priorities of local farmers/landowners. The hope is that BAG might be able to begin a programme of surveying in late summer or early autumn 2021.

<https://www.facebook.com/Brigstock-Archaeological-Group-897625083913727/>

Community Landscape Archaeology & Survey Project

CLASP is optimistic that they will be able to have a programme of work in 2021. Rob Close, Chair of CLASP Trustees said: "We are in the early stages of planning two excavations at previously visited sites, one to be held in August and one in September. Both will depend, of course, on meeting all COVID safeguarding requirements. We should know more by the end of April. Please look at the CLASP website at the end April or early May for information": <https://claspweb.org.uk/>

Rob continued, "We will make anyone new to CLASP very welcome and are keen to attract new members, whether experienced Archaeologists or simply enthusiastic about archaeology. Training will be provided." 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

Dr Stephen Upex wrote that he had been hoping to get back into a second season of excavation at Durobrivae this year, but the current crisis had limited their planning for this. Stephen is much more optimistic about

next year which he states will be a better bet for an excavation. It will be worth keeping an eye on the website to see what is happening: <https://www.nenevalleyarchaeology.co.uk>

Upper Nene Archaeological Society

The Upper Nene Archaeological Society are not going to have an excavation at Easter this year. However, there will possibly be some more geophysical surveys undertaken in the summer or autumn. Diana Friendship-Taylor says that Piddington Museum will hopefully be open by mid-May, if regulations permit.

Please visit the society's website:

<http://www.unas.org.uk>

Higham Ferrers Archaeology and Research Society

HiFARS was founded in July 2008. Its Facebook page states: HiFARS offers its members the opportunity to get involved in archaeology at their small training dig in Higham Ferrers. Members can either get down in the dirt and dig or work with our committee and volunteers in other ways, such as organizing events, developing the HiFARS archive or helping with projects such as the Moat clearance we have been helping with at the Castle Field in Higham Ferrers.

HiFARS was one of 12 local Community groups in 2020 to get a share of £7,500 raised by Higham Ferrers' former mayor.

Visit their website: <http://www.hifars.org.uk/>

And their Facebook group:

<https://m.facebook.com/HiFars-253981924704946/about/>

Irthlingborough Archaeological Society

The Irthlingborough Archaeological Society website says that the society is planning for a further geophysical magnetometer survey at their Tannery Cottages site. *"This will be combined with the existing results to provide a better understanding of the extent of archaeological remains present to help target future fieldwork."*

Website: <http://irthlingborough.co.uk>

Email: irthlingborough@gmail.com

Middle Nene Archaeological Group

MidNAG cancelled its 2020 excavations which it had hoped to run 15 - 28 August 2020. No events are, as yet, proposed for 2021 but any details about forthcoming work will be published on their website:

<https://www.midnag.org.uk/>

Between 1 March - 30 October 2020 Oundle Museum displayed a small exhibition of some artefacts found during MidNAG's 2016-2019 excavations at Nassington.

Northampton Museum and Art Gallery

The newly refurbished and extended Northampton Museum and Art Gallery was due to reopen last year, but this was, of course, sabotaged by the pandemic and lockdowns.

In preparation for the rescheduled opening, they have launched a new website, which is worth having a look at:

<https://www.northamptonmuseums.com/>.

The major new display will be an enlarged shoe gallery. The History of Northampton will be a refreshed version of the old display, where the prehistoric to medieval section was created in the mid-1980s with money from the Northampton Development Corporation, when it closed down. There will also be a new extension into more recent times.

However, there is a scheme to add some more up to date archaeological information to the old displays, and hopefully we can provide more details in the next newsletter.

Archaeology at Chester House Estate

As our Chair has pointed out in his introduction, there has been extensive activity at Irchester/Chester Farm over recent months. Possibly of special interest to NAS members are the excavations of the Roman town and the opening of the ARC. Here are updates on both:

Excavations

The Chester House Estate near Wellingborough is a £14.5m project funded by Northamptonshire County Council (now East Northamptonshire) and the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The first building due to open in spring is the Archaeological Resource Centre - The ARC - which will catalogue more than 10,000 years of Northamptonshire's history, see the update below. With the site itself within the Roman town at Irchester, the Estate has partnered with the University of Leicester School of Archaeology and Ancient History (SAAH) which will hold annual digs that members of the public can join as volunteers. The 2021 excavation is provisionally scheduled for 14 -25 June.

Dr Sarah Scott, Deputy Head of the SAAH at the University of Leicester said: "*The Chester House Estate lies at the heart of one of the best preserved walled Roman small towns in Britain. Past and present survey and excavation has focused not only on the core of the walled town with its houses, workshops and temples, but its suburbs and cemeteries, allowing us to better understand the lives of its inhabitants.*

This exciting project will reveal more of the town's origins, development and people, and will provide an exceptional range of excavation and practical training opportunities for University of Leicester students, local schools and community volunteers."

Business manager, Jack Pishhorn said: "*At present much of this heritage is buried or kept in unsuitable conditions; our challenge is to preserve it, bring it to life and tell its stories.*

The partnership with the University of Leicester's School of Archaeology and Ancient History is really exciting because the digs on site will be accessible to the public, who can also come and volunteer. Part of the process will be to involve the local

community in everything we do. We have the opportunity to create a legacy for many years to come. The future is positive and is, in itself, history in the making."

Dr Scott added: "*The experience and expertise of both partners will inform the development of a bespoke educational programme for all ages that combines archaeology, social and economic history, landscape history, and the study of human communities and their impact. It will benefit the health, education and wellbeing of diverse communities in Northamptonshire and surrounding counties by facilitating and encouraging access to archaeological research, heritage, education and volunteering opportunities."*

To register interest in volunteering visit: <https://chesterhouseestate.org/about/volunteering/>

Archaeological Resource Centre

Archaeological Archives Curator Ben Donnelly-Symes has been at The Chester House Estate since August last year. He will be overseeing the transferring and cataloguing of 1,600 boxes of important historical material which will be arriving at the new Archaeological Resource Centre this spring. Local volunteers will be invited to get hands on with archiving and with this year's planned summer dig, visitors will be able to enjoy a timeline walk in the Roman walled town and explore a large indoor museum when it opens in October. Here is what Ben says: "*We have some great news to report: builders are back on site again! We hope to have the ARC building signed over in April as the work remaining on the ARC is relatively minor. Once this has taken place, we will be spending the next few months moving archives to the ARC from the various legacy stores around the UK. By the end of 2021 I anticipate that we will have over 20,000 boxes of Northamptonshire's archaeological archives, including associated documentary archives, within the store.*

We hope to be able to open the store to researchers and volunteers from late June to early July 2021 (exact date TBD) after the majority of the archives are moved to the store. It will be a large long-term project to make the archives more accessible as none of the archive has been properly catalogued and over half of the collection needs re-packing. If you are interested in volunteering to help with this project or would like to access any of our collections for research, then please do not hesitate to get in touch."



The new Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre

"Finally, we are building our library collection from scratch so if anyone would like to donate any books relating to Northamptonshire's archaeology then let us know and we'd be happy to accept them."

Cultural Recovery Awards

Edition 437 of The Heritage Alliance's Heritage Update (dated 25 February 2021) provided updates on recipients of two strands of the Government's Cultural Recovery Fund:

Culture Recovery Fund-Round One Awardees

'Over £18 million has been awarded in the final grants from the first round of the Culture Recovery Fund, with £13.5 million awarded to 22 heritage organisations through the Culture Recovery Fund for Heritage.'

Amongst the awardees are two sites in Northamptonshire, Chester House receiving £719,700 and Wicksteed Park £302,700.

Further details and a full list of awardees from this round can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/news/more-than-18-million-awarded-in-final-grants-from-first-round-of-culture-recovery-fund

Culture Recovery Grants through the AHF

Last week, the Architectural Heritage Fund (AHF) announced the recipients from its Culture Recovery Grants funding package, which formed part of the wider Culture Recovery efforts funded by DCMS and administered by Historic England. Grant awards will support 44 historic sites across England, listed in full at:

<http://ahfund.org.uk/news-source/2021/2/18/culture-recovery-grants>

One organisation receiving a grant is Delapré Abbey Preservation Trust, Northampton. Information on the latter's website posted on 19th February states that:

"Delapré Abbey Preservation Trust has been awarded £19,250 by the Architectural Heritage Fund's £1 million grants programme to support charities and social enterprises occupying historic buildings affected by the pandemic. The grant - funded by the Government's Culture Recovery Fund and managed through partnership with Historic England - will enable Delapré Abbey Preservation Trust to develop plans to protect the heritage of the Abbey's 19th Century Stables and support the development of a new fundraising strategy."

www.delapreabbey.org

Heritage Update also highlighted that The Government recently confirmed that The Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme will be renewed for this year, on the same terms as previous years. The Scheme, which allows listed places of worship to claim back VAT paid on repairs and alterations, was due to finish at the end of this financial year.'

Rockingham Castle

In addition, in the most recent edition of the Castle Studies Group Bulletin, 33, January 2021, p2-3), Therron Welstead, in an article on the Culture Recovery Fund said that: "Rockingham Castle (Northamptonshire) was awarded £273,400 from the 'Culture Recovery Fund'. A significant proportion is to cover the running costs and other overheads. The remainder would be used to implement changes to allow events to go ahead and general opening in 2021. This includes creating a larger space for staff in the ticket office, a modernisation and refurbishment of the toilet facilities, and to cover the cost of appropriate PPE for the staff working at the castle."

Northants Adult Learning Courses



With lockdown restrictions likely to be in place for some time to come, why not catch up on some of the online archaeology courses that are being offered by Northants Adult Learning:

Course: UZZ2BA32

The Archaeology of the Catuvellauni

Starting: Tuesday 20 April 2021.

Start Time: 19.00. 7 sessions.

Course tutor: Michael J Curtis BA(Hons), MA

The Catuvellauni were a late Iron Age tribe whose territory included present day Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, and Northamptonshire. This course looks at the archaeological evidence of this tribe from its origin in the late Iron Age and on into the Roman period. It looks at the tribal territory, the establishment of its tribal and later regional centre at St Albans, urban and rural settlement, communications, religion, industry, and the economy. With

reference to Northamptonshire, the course examines the organisation of the region in the Roman period and considers the archaeological evidence from some of the many sites within the county and in the bordering counties.

Course: UZZ1DA14

Roman Art and Archaeology

Starting: Monday 3 May 2021.

Start Time: 19.00. 7 Sessions.

Course Tutors:

Michael J Curtis and Caroline Hawkins

This course focuses on Roman art and material culture from c.200 BC to AD 400. We will explore how the development of architecture, sculpture, painting, ceramics, and minor arts across the Roman Empire can offer us insight into everyday life of these past times. With a focus on the skills and role of the craftsmen, we will discuss urban life, religious beliefs and funerary practices, political ideology, and cultural identity. Information on these, and other courses on offer, can be found on the Northants Adult Learning website:

<https://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/council-services/children-families-education/adult-learning/Pages/default.aspx>
mikecurtis1956@yahoo.co.uk

Research Project on Public Benefit needs Your Help

An important research project is looking at public benefit (social value) in developer led archaeology and wants to hear the thoughts of people in the heritage sector. Kate Faccia and Dr Sadie Watson write:

"We are a UKRI-funded research project focussing on public benefit in developer-led archaeology. Our ultimate goal is to create an industry toolkit, and contribute to policy papers, that improve the public benefit that we generate for the communities affected by our work. However, there is no participation requirement that your group or organisation excavates or uses archaeological assets in its

work. In fact, we welcome feedback from a range of professions within our sector."

There is a short video explaining their interest in the public benefit of developer-led archaeology: <https://youtu.be/288sdXA-xPc>. And a survey link: https://mola.fra1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_7ODym3v3EWGIWQ6

As a thank you for participating, at the end of completed surveys, you have an opportunity to win a £100 in voucher (for yourself or a nominated charity). The survey will be available for approximately one month, and may take up to about 20 minutes, depending on your experience in engaging with archaeology and whether you choose to enter more detailed information/explanations. Please contact either Kate Faccia (kfaccia@mola.org.uk) or Sadie Watson (Principal Investigator, swatson@mola.org.uk), if you have any questions or concerns. If you'd like to follow this project, there is a blog:

<https://www.mola.org.uk/blog/archaeology-and-public-benefit-project-update-1-moving-debate-forward>

LinkedIn:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/sadie-watson-976ba5143/>

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/kate-faccia-21402115/>

Twitter:

Sadie Watson (@DrSadieWatson) Kate Faccia (@FacciaKate)

And YouTube:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCtGu6wIzb0rPqQ_jlzQdFcq

Kate Faccia and Sadie Watson"

Book Reviews

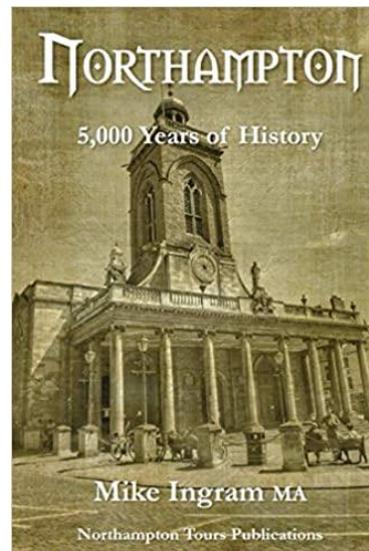
Northampton: 5000 Years of History

Mike Ingram, 316 pages, 44 illustrations

Northampton Tours Publications, 2020

Printed by Amazon, £19.99

Overviews of the history and archaeology of Northampton do not come along all that often, so this volume warrants a lengthy review, especially when parts of the content make it quite a difficult to review without providing some quite detailed comments.



If you want 1000 years of Northampton history, from the Norman Conquest onward complete with details of visiting medieval kings and their battles then go ahead, at over 300 pages and relatively few illustrations it provides plenty of good historical reading matter. There are also pleasing aspects for the more recent history of the town, especially the extensive coverage of the radical past of Northampton, now sadly totally in the past, in both a broad overview chapter on radicalism and a chapter devoted to the life of Charles Bradlaugh, our most famous radical MP.

However, from an archaeological perspective, if you are hoping for a sensible account of the first 80% of those claimed 5000 years of history, you will be sadly disappointed in every respect. The first 3500 years of that history fly by in an opening chapter of six pages, including a half page illustration. The next 500 years, from the end of the Romans to the Norman Conquest takes only a little longer, a whole nine pages.

And the half page illustration to Chapter 1 is a view of Chalk Lane car park, claiming that

"this is where Northampton began", with the introduction telling us that "Northampton is over 5,520 years old...older than Stonehenge...it began as a small Neolithic farm or settlement on what is now Northampton's Chalk Lane car park".

This is taking local chauvinism to a ludicrous extreme. The truth is that the sizeable worked flint assemblage from Chalk Lane is not an indicator of a settlement specifically at that location, but a product of chance survival and excavation. Most archaeological sites in Northampton are, of course, a palimpsest of the past 1000+ years of pit digging, wall foundations, cellars and drains, with the earliest deposits usually cut to pieces and surviving on only small isolated islands. At Chalk Lane the presence of the bailey bank of the castle had prevented this from happening, so all the underlying pre-Conquest soils were in relatively pristine condition for an urban site. There was also the time, in those pre-commercial archaeology days, to investigate more of those early buried soils, while on surrounding sites, such as St Peters Street, the worked flints only come as scattered and sparse residual finds in later deposits.

To keep the review relatively short I will focus on only a few of the many other issues with the archaeological coverage. But firstly, on the positive side, I will say that most of the significant archaeological sites do at least get a mention, which must be unique for a publication by an historian.

There are a number of small but annoying inaccuracies, of which I will mention just one, as it relates to a site that I excavated. The claim that the pre-Conquest defensive bank, as excavated at Green Street was "faced with wood or stone and topped with a wooden palisade" (page 14). Yes, the clay bank had a wooden revetment along the front, later replaced by a stone revetment, but the only surviving thing that sat on top of the bank was the post-Conquest stone wall of the

medieval defences. The placing of a wooden palisade on top in the text appears to be purely an assumption by the author that this is what he thinks it should have looked like. There is also a major issue that I must consider in some detail, and that is the claim that Castle Hill, which stood to the north-east of the castle, as mapped and recorded through the 18th and 19th centuries, was actually an original castle motte with a shell keep on top. The archaeological evidence from the excavations of 1962, due to be published in the next issue of the journal, had demonstrated that the mound in fact dates to the Civil War refurbishment of the castle defences. Lacking this publication, I can accept that the motte interpretation can still be proposed as a theory. What I find unacceptable is to produce a map of the medieval town, repeated several times (fig 6, page 23; fig 9, page 55 and fig 11, page 63), where fictitious walls have been drawn in to link the castle to Castle Hill.

Also, the 'mound to the immediate north of the Chalk Lane car park', is not one of the towns 'muckhills', it is an archaeological spoil heap. It is Castle Hill that later became a town muckhill.

I must also take exception to Mike's comment on page 8 that "many of these important [archaeological sites have] not been made public, [as] they lie behind expensive paywalls or in some cases, not even written yet." While commercial archaeology has many faults, and developers will often block publicity during excavations through fear of delays to the development or night-time visits from metal detectorists, the majority of field archaeologists are keen to bring their work to the public. But taking a complex archaeological site to publication is a much harder task than excavating the site in the first place, and the pace of development throughout my career always meant that new fieldwork had to take precedence over analysis and report writing, which is why I'm

now spending my retirement catching up with my accumulated backlog. It also requires money, and in some unfortunate cases there are sites that deserve publication but now have no budget to pay for the necessary work, and a commercial archaeological unit does have to be run as a viable business, or goes out of business. In my experience many, although I have to note not all, of my fellow commercial archaeologists have gone beyond their own working hours and personal "pay walls", putting in extra hours to see sites through to publication.

It is not part of some conspiracy to hide archaeology from the public. There is also much online through the *Archaeology Data Service*, and you can always get in touch with the archaeologists themselves, we are generally keen to provide information when it is asked for.

Finally, I must also note that for a work of history it is remarkable that the volume contains no bibliographic referencing at all, so you can only accept the story told at face value and have no direct means of finding any of the source material, either archaeological, and there is much that is evidently from the pages of *Northamptonshire Archaeology*, or historical, despite the history sections containing numerous direct quotations. This is a particular failing when the text is presented without any evident qualification between factual records and the authors own flights of fancy. In his introduction, Mike states that, "*a number of myths have crept into the town's popular history, this book will hopefully set them all straight*". I'm afraid that ambitious claim has not been fulfilled.

Andy Chapman

Northampton in 50 Buildings

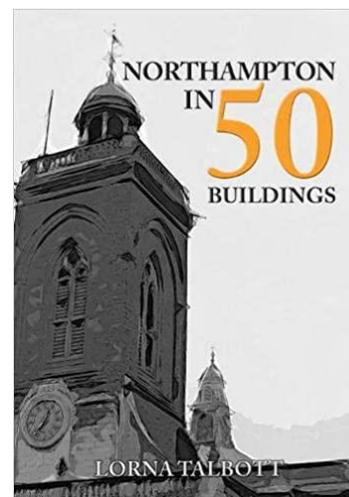
Lorna Talbott, 96 pages, numerous colour photos

Amberley Publishing, 2020, £14.99

This is part of an Amberley series, *Xtown/city in 50 buildings*, and can be described in

the famous and most useful phrase from Science Fiction author Douglas Adams as, 'mostly harmless'.

You can always quibble about the odd omissions in such a publication, I would have liked to see a few of the more recent buildings, even though now lost, such as the old Art Deco Fish Market and also the Greyfriars Bus Station, which for all its failings played a significant part in the lives of all older Northamptonians, rather than it getting just a passing superficial reference as the "mouth of hell". This is just trotting out a description invented to help justify its demolition following decades of council neglect, and its replacement by a station too small to serve the entire town, and which pollutes the air around the too narrow and constricted street access, while the old bus station site sits empty and derelict.

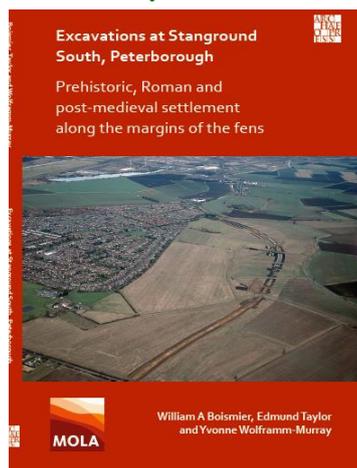


But to return to the book, it does cover a wide range of buildings, and while public and corporate buildings feature highly it does include some little gems, such as the 'Swiss chalet' of No 1 Victoria Gardens. The photography of the buildings is competent but given the turnover of the series it is not top quality architectural photography, with many stretched perspectives and leaning walls. But for anyone who wants a broad overview of the major buildings of Northampton ranging in date from the castle to the new International Academy, which

opened in 2018 (and I haven't yet seen it), it is a good starting point. However, as you might expect in a wide-ranging series aimed at a popular market, the research has been less than comprehensive, so don't treat the accompanying text as the gospel truth. From an archaeological viewpoint, the middle Saxon timber 'palace', flanked by the original churches of St Peter and St Gregory, should be the starting point for significant buildings of Northampton, and the true creation of the town, but here credit goes to the Danes in the 9th century. And, of course, we have the old chestnut rolled out yet again that the castle was not only built by Simon de Senlis, but as a 'fortified dwelling in 1084'. It amazes me how undocumented events can acquire such precise attribution and dating. But as I said at the beginning, as a popular production it is a good buy and 'mostly harmless'.

Andy Chapman

Recent publications



Excavations at Stanground South, Peterborough: prehistoric, Roman, and post-medieval settlement along the margins of the fens, Boismier, WA, Taylor, E and Wolfram-Murray, Y, 2021

Archaeopress, 291 pages; paperback £55, Epublication £16

This is another in the growing series of Archaeopress monographs catching up with the past of Northamptonshire Archaeology

and its successor MOLA. Excavation at Stanground South 2007-2009 on the south-eastern outskirts of Peterborough, alongside the Fen edge, examined a multi-period landscape of 70ha in advance of housing development. The earliest features comprised four burnt mounds of the early Bronze Age, and a small group of up to six cremations. In the middle Bronze Age there was an unenclosed urnfield cemetery, with 78 cremations. In the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age a substantial droveway, up to 65m wide, led northwards from the Fen edge to higher ground, and in the middle Iron Age a series of rectangular fields/paddocks were attached to a settlement adjacent to the Fen edge. In the late Iron Age there was an enclosed settlement, and in the Roman period (2nd and late 4th centuries AD) small enclosures abutted the eastern side of the late Iron Age enclosed settlement. The economy from the later Bronze Age onwards was focussed on pastoralism, with limited evidence for grain cultivation. During the Roman period this seems to have further specialised towards dairy farming. The local environment seems to have undergone little change from the later Bronze Age, being largely open with areas of woodland and wetter areas. Peat growth during the Iron Age covered the lowest lying Bronze Age features.

East Midlands Historic Environment Research Framework

The East Midlands Historic Environment Research Framework (EMHERF) is being updated after 15 years. The first and last full overview for the East Midlands region, recording specific important sites/finds, was the now slightly outdated, but still useful, 2006 volume: *The archaeology of the East Midlands: an archaeological resource assessment and research agenda*, Nick Cooper (ed), Leicester Archaeology Monograph, 13. Historic England are funding an update for

two of the periods: the Palaeolithic and the late Bronze Age to Iron Age. The results will be online, and will be regularly updated. It is anticipated that work on these two chapters will provide a template for future updates for the other periods. David Knight of Trent and Peak Archaeology is co-ordinating the programme. He is an honorary research fellow in the University of Nottingham's Department of Classics and Archaeology, and can be contacted at dknight@yorkat.co.uk. Mark Holmes, of MOLA and NAS, is on the committee.

Obituaries

Lesley-Ann Mather (1965-2020), the Archaeological Advisor for Northamptonshire County Council, died in December 2020, at the age of only 53, from bowel cancer. After graduation, Lesley-Ann joined Northamptonshire Archaeology in 1993 and over the next two years worked on a series of sites, mostly in the county. She also experienced Field Archaeology with several different units after leaving Northampton in 1996; working for Albion Archaeology, Bedford; followed by Edinburgh and then BUFAU (Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit) from 1997. She subsequently moved into Development Control Archaeology, firstly for Leicestershire in 2000 before moving to Bedfordshire. In 2009, she became Northamptonshire County Council Archaeological Advisor, a post she stayed in until her untimely death. She took over at a time when the county had not had a Development Control Archaeologist for a number of years, so she came into post after a period in which Northamptonshire had become notorious in the archaeological world for setting a precedent that, if had become an example followed by other planning authorities, could have endangered the whole process of commercial archaeology. Lesley-Ann therefore had the tricky task of

bringing archaeology back into the local planning process. Over a number of years, Lesley-Ann and her assistant, Liz Mordue, re-established Northamptonshire as a place of sound archaeological practice. She instigated the first version of the deposition guidelines in 2014 for the future Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre (NARC), and she would have been delighted that after more than 20 years Northamptonshire is about to have a new dedicated archive repository at Chester House. Archaeology has lost, far too young, a staunch and unstinting advocate, but above all a nice and genuine person.

Rob Atkins

Adrian Challands (1944-2020), who has died at the age of 76, was the Archaeological Officer for Peterborough Development Corporation, working from the Field Centre of the Nene Valley Research Committee, which was established during the development of the city from 1969. He was one of its longest-serving members. He was also a member of both NAS and the Middle Nene Archaeological Group (MidNAG). Following the winding up of the Peterborough Development Corporation, Adrian became an archaeological consultant: he surveyed many sites and produced specialist reports for Cambridge Archaeological Unit.

Summarised from a full obituary on the website of the Nene Valley Archaeological Trust:

<https://www.nenevalleyarchaeology.co.uk/post/obituary-adrian-challands>

And finally ...

If you have any items for the Facebook page, contact: Andy Chapman, NAS secretary and journal editor: NAS196674@gmail.com

If you have any news or information for the next NAS newsletter contact:

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