



NASNEWS

Newsletter of the Northamptonshire Archaeological Society

Website: www.northants-archaeology.org.uk



June 2015

Summer meeting

A walking tour of Towcester

Thursday, 30 July at 7.30pm

led by Brian Giggins

Meet at Richmond Road car park, situated between Waitrose and Watling Street, at 7.30 pm. Local historian Brian Giggins will lead the walk, looking at some of the recently discovered archaeological sites and local historic buildings. The walk will last an hour and from 8.30pm there will be a visit to Towcester Museum to look at their new exhibition.

The evening will end with an informal gathering at the bar of the new micro-brewery at the Old Mill.

The meeting and access to the museum will be free to members if we attract up to 20 (with museum access covered by NAS), but if we reach the maximum of 30 attending we will ask everyone to make a donation of £1 to provide an extra donation for access to the museum. Non-members at £3.50 to cover museum access.

If coming, please email the secretary at NAS196674@gmail.com to reserve a place so we can gauge the numbers interested.

NAS committee

At the first committee meeting of 2015, David Waller was elected as Chair and Steven Hollowell as Vice-chair.

Northamptonshire County Council and Heritage Services

The march towards the dismantling of all NCC directly-provided public services continues apace. Christine Addison the long standing

Historic Environment Record Officer has been made redundant, finishing at the end of May, and will be replaced sometime after the end of May by someone with a more limited remit and therefore cheaper to employ. With just a single HER post, all that will be possible will be to deal with the day-to-day enquires and so an end to any HER enhancement.

In a similar vein, yet more experienced staff will be shed by Northamptonshire Record Office, so that service too is increasingly reduced to just maintaining a basic service.

See the NAS letter to the NCC at the end of this newsletter.

Northampton Station

With the opening of the new station at Northampton in January the history of the site, once occupied by an important royal castle at which numerous parliaments and the trial of Thomas Becket were held, has been marked in a number of ways.

The windows of the new station have been decorated with extracts from John Speed's map of Northampton from 1610 showing the castle and surrounding area.



Downstairs, next to the coffee bar, there is a display panel featuring a brief history of the castle, the recent excavations by Northamptonshire Archaeology (MOLA Northampton) and the earlier station buildings.



Finally, just outside the station John Speed's map of Northampton has been recreated as a 3D model in bronze.



The demolition of the old station is now nearing completion and the final stage of archaeological works are a watching brief on the lifting of the floor slab. This area is part cellared and two of the branch lines of the Victorian railway ran across the area, so the potential for finding any further evidence relating to the castle is limited.

Angel Street, Northampton

The revived Phipps Northampton Brewery Company has been refurbishing the bar space of the Albion Brewery Bar. Last year the stones from a well preserved medieval malt oven excavated at Angel Street, the site of the new County Hall, by MOLA Northampton, were dismantled and handed over to the brewery, who visited the site to see the oven in-situ.



The lower section of the oven has now been reassembled to form a feature in the new bar, where it will have an appropriate new use as the hearth for a restored Northampton made, cast iron, pot belly stove, so a fire will burn in it once more.



Photo: courtesy of Alaric at the NBC

Also of interest from the Angel Street site was the recovery of two incomplete and discarded stylised chess pieces in antler together with quantities of discarded antler offcuts, all probably dating to the mid to late 12th century. While some 60-70 of these simple non-figurative pieces are known from Britain, often recovered from high-class sites such as castles, abbeys and manors, this is the first located workshop site.

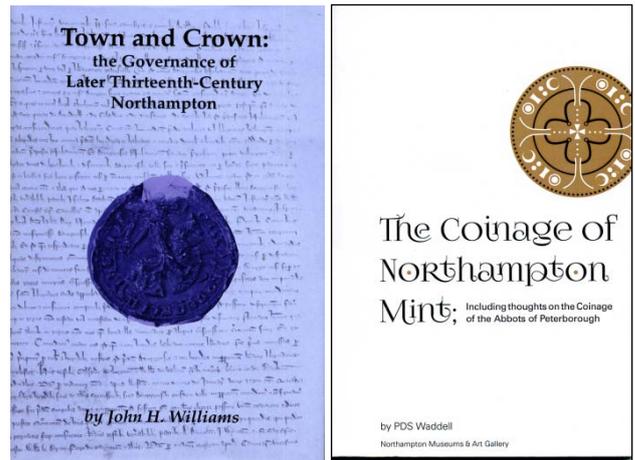


Following coverage on BBC online local news (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-northamptonshire-30214707>) and a blog on the MOLA website (<http://www.mola.org.uk/blog/bishop-and-king-angel-street>), there was further interest with a short note in the CBA's *British Archaeology*, 140, Jan/Feb 2015, and a longer note in *Current Archaeology*, 301, Mar 2015, and there was even international coverage through *Der Spiegel* online (<http://www.spiegel.de/wissenschaft/mensch/schachfiguren-schnitzwerkstatt-aus-dem-mittelalter-entdeckt-a-1020952.html>); and being featured as Find of the Month in the American magazine, *Archaeology*, Mar/Apr 2015.

Recent books

There was a good turnout of members for the AGM last October, which was followed by an excellent lecture by **John Williams**, the head of the Northampton Development Corporation

Archaeology Unit in the 1970s and 80s. In retirement John has returned to his unfinished business with the documentary evidence for the town and has produced a study published by Northamptonshire Record Society, **Town and Crown: the Governance of Later Thirteenth-Century Northampton**. To purchase a copy contact the Record Society at Northamptonshire Records Office, Wootton Hall Park.



Also of interest is a slim paperback published by and available from Northampton Museums and Art Gallery at £6.99, **The Coinage of Northampton Mint** by **PDS Waddell**. This book provides a comprehensive summary of the types of coins minted at Northampton between the 10th and 13th centuries.

Ledgerstone Survey of England and Wales

(Extract from The Heritage's Alliance's *Heritage Update*, 300, 8 May 2015)

The **Ledgerstone Survey of England and Wales (LSEW)** project aims to record all the ledgerstones of England and Wales, but is starting with a pilot project which will record the ledgers in churches now out of use for regular worship and in the care of The Churches Conservation Trust (CCT).

LSEW is keen to engage as many volunteers as possible to record ledgers before more disappear and to develop educational resources to enable anyone interested in their local ancestors, in letter cutting or the

beauty of these stones, to access ledgers. By working on a defined group of readily accessible churches, led by a dedicated Development Officer, the aim of the Pilot is to fully explore the practicalities of recording with volunteers from a variety of backgrounds and interests.

However, the project invites anyone who would like to record the stones in their own church or in others near them to contact them. If you are interested and willing to help record the ledgerstones in your local church then go to the Ledgerstone Survey website and see how you can help. For more information see the dedicated website: <http://www.lsew.org.uk/>

Northamptonshire Archaeology volume 38, 2015

In my editor's report to the AGM I did promise to get together the overdue journal for publication in the spring of 2015. Unfortunately, I have not managed to achieve this, although the preparation does progress.

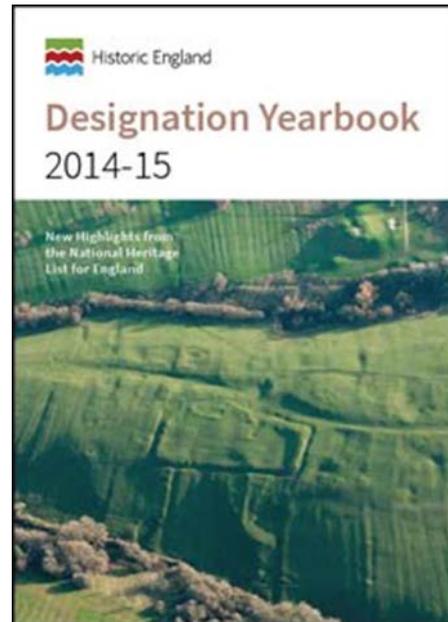
However, the realistic target now is to have it ready for the next AGM in November.

New Highlights from the National Heritage List for England

The new Designation Yearbook for 2014-15 is available as a free download from the Historic England website:

<http://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/designation-yearbook-2014-15/>

The Yearbook features a wide range of buildings and sites added to the National Heritage List for England in 2014-15, including for example the revision of early schedulings and new schedulings of medieval settlements.



The future of Heritage Services in Northamptonshire

On the next page we attach a copy of a letter that the society has forwarded to Northamptonshire County Council, through Councillor Harker, seeking information about the future provision of heritage services in the county in this era of austerity.

Copies of the letter have been forwarded to:
NAS President, HRH The Duke of Gloucester, GCVO;

Dr D Dishon, Principal Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas, Historic England;

Dr M Heyworth, Director, Council for British Archaeology (CBA);

Mr D Harries, Secretary, Northamptonshire Record Society;

Mr P Perkins, Secretary, Northamptonshire Industrial Archaeology Group (NIAG).

Andy Chapman
NAS secretary and journal editor
NAS EMAIL NAS196674@gmail.com

Dear Councillor Harker

Northamptonshire Archaeological Society (NAS) was formed in 1974 as a society of both amateur and professional archaeologists researching the County's rich heritage and many of whose members have strong links to the County Council's Historic Environment Record (HER).

NAS is aware how the present County's Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan are pushing the administration into evolving into a 'Next Generation Council'. This Society would be interested to establish from you how these proposals may affect the heritage services through the proposed Community Interest Companies (CICs). In particular we are interested in:-

- The maintenance and development of the HER which provides essential information for the County Council, district councils, developers, planning consultants and individuals to satisfy the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practical Guidance 12 (PPG12) when dealing with planning issues.
- The essential link between the HER and NCC Archaeological Planning Advice Service to ensure that NCC planning staff are provided with up to date archaeological information on which to provide heritage advice and that the results of development-led archaeological work is speedily disseminated to the Northamptonshire public.
- The continuation of the Northamptonshire Finds Liaison project (PAS) which provides much needed finds information from both the public and metal detector groups that augments the HER data and feeds into the planning process.
- The Archives Service which contains documents that augment the medieval and post-medieval data of the HER.
- The 'monuments-in-care' maintained by the Council which contribute to Northamptonshire's historic landscape and also Chester Farm which has great potential for promoting the County's historic landscape and archaeological past.

NAS has for long recognised that the protection of the historic environment in Northamptonshire helps support local economic growth and sustainable development as well as contributing to community wellbeing. It is in this context that we understand that significant cuts in public funding and declining grants to Local Authorities have impacted on already over-stretched heritage services across the country. We are concerned to ensure that this does not reach a crisis point in Northamptonshire, especially with regard to the HER.

We may assure you that NAS would be willing to offer advice on the process of defining and shaping heritage services for the future even though we currently lack the capacity to provide any such services directly. We do, however, have expertise within our membership across a wide range of archaeological and heritage interests.

We look forward to hearing from you in respect of the specific points raised above.

David Waller
Chairman, Northamptonshire Archaeological Society