



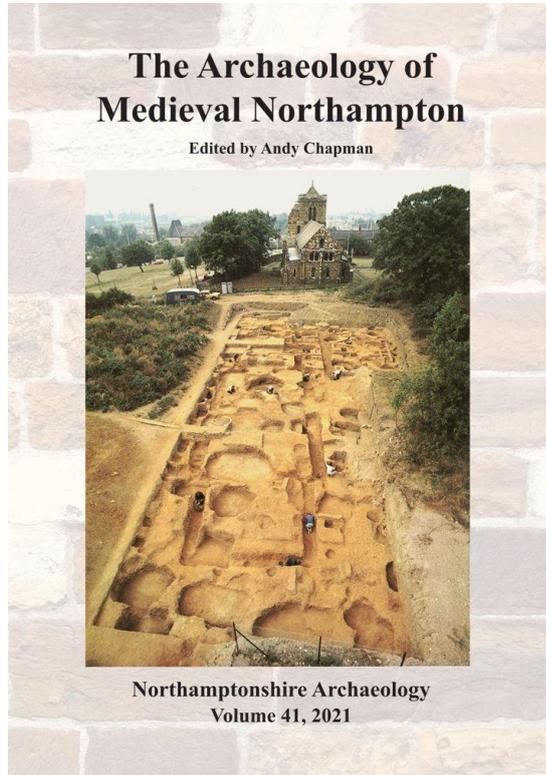
# NASNEWS

Newsletter of the Northamptonshire Archaeological Society

Website: [www.northants-archaeology.org.uk](http://www.northants-archaeology.org.uk)



## March 2022



Through February and early March copies of the new special edition of the journal were delivered by post or by hand to members and institutional subscribers, and all members should have received their copy by now.

If there are any members who haven't received a copy yet, please email us on [NAS196674@gmail.com](mailto:NAS196674@gmail.com) so we can check; it may be that you have not renewed your subscription, although Pat has been checking these and reminding people as we worked through the members list.

As we printed extra copies to sell to the public, a book launch for the volume was held at Northampton Museum & Art Gallery on Saturday, 26 February, with copies of the journal on sale. The lecture hall at the museum was full with a capacity audience of around 80, which included a mixture of familiar and unfamiliar faces.

According to museum staff, the hall could have been filled twice over with advance bookings. The day was a great success, below is a view of the hall as we were setting up, with images from the journal projected into the alcoves on the side walls. Unfortunately, I was so focussed on the meeting that once it got going I failed to take any photos of the meeting in progress, so if anyone has any such images I would welcome copies.



Andy Chapman opened with an Introduction and a presentation on Northampton Castle. After a tea and biscuits break John Williams examined the Middle Anglo-Saxon timber and stone halls and a study of mortar mixers, while the meeting concluded with a presentation by Mike Shaw on his research on the changing pottery distribution across the town through time and on the survival of early property boundaries within the post-medieval to modern town.

Copies of the journal are, of course, still available through NAS and they are also in the bookshops at Northampton Museum and Art Gallery, and at Chester House, Irchester.

Andy Chapman



## We would like to invite you to a community archaeology taster day at The Chester House Estate, Northants

A collaborative team including representatives from the School of Archaeology & Ancient History (SAAH) at the University of Leicester, The Chester House Estate, University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS), Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA), the Council for British Archaeology East Midlands (CBA-EM), Council for British Archaeology South Midlands (CBA-SM), the Enabled Archaeology Foundation (EAF) and Northamptonshire Archaeological Society (NAS), are planning to offer a wide range of workshops at The Chester House Estate which will be useful to local archaeological societies and their members, along with others who have a more general interest in archaeology.

As a first step we are offering a special taster day on **Sunday 15th May 2022** to provide an introduction to community archaeology, from project research, design and management to post-excavation and archiving. Sessions will include talks, practical exercises and discussions, drawing on case studies from across the East Midlands. There will be opportunities throughout the day to find out more about the kinds of support the team can offer community groups. The day will include a tour of the new state-of-the-art Archaeological Resource Centre (ARC) for Northamptonshire. No previous experience of archaeology is required and the Estate and the location for this event are accessible for wheelchair users.

**Date: Sunday 15th May 2022**

**Time: 0930-1600**

**Venue: Threshing Barn, The Chester House Estate, Northants**

**Cost: £10**

The Chester House Estate includes a highly recommended café/restaurant and registrants to the taster session will be entitled to a 10% discount on meals on the day. The taster day will include information about the exciting range of networking events and future workshops which the team are planning to offer at the Estate, including field surveying & field archaeology, photogrammetry, standing building recording, pottery identification and archiving.

**You can book a place on the taster day via the Estate website**

<https://chesterhouseestate.merlintickets.co.uk/product/COM-ARCDAY>

Future events will be advertised on the website and via associated social media pages from 15th May.

If you have any questions about the workshop please email Sarah Scott, Professor of Archaeology, School of Archaeology and Ancient History, University of Leicester [sas11@le.ac.uk](mailto:sas11@le.ac.uk)

If you have any questions about the venue please email via the link at <https://chesterhouseestate.org/contact/>

To find us <https://chesterhouseestate.org/plan-your-visit/>

**#HISTORYINTHEMAKING  
#MAKINGHISTORYTOGETHER**

**NAS tour of Oundle  
and visit to Oundle Museum,  
Sunday, 1 May**

Arrive at long term car park on Benefield Road at the west end of Oundle (PE8 4EU), where Brian Giggins will meet us at 11am for a tour of the historical buildings at Oundle town.

Lunch at Boxwood Café at 12.45pm, sited behind the Barn Garden Centre on the Barnwell Road, which turns off the A605 opposite the exit to Barnwell and enters Oundle at the west end over South bridge.

Gill Johnston will need to know numbers for this (see below). Alternatively, the Ship Inn along West Street does good Sunday lunches but will be very busy and crowded. Please book on line if this is your choice.

The remainder of the trip starts at 1.45pm, near Oundle Museum, with a short intro and then the time is yours.

There is no cost, but there is a maximum of 20 people for the trip, so please email Rob Atkins at [ratkins@mola.org.uk](mailto:ratkins@mola.org.uk) or phone on 01604 264549 to reserve a place. If you want lunch at Boxwood Café please indicate so we can reserve the correct numbers.

**NAS visit to Fotheringhay Castle  
and church  
Sunday, 29 May, 1.30pm**

Gill Johnston, Steve Parry and Mike Lee have kindly agreed to provide a NAS trip to Fotheringhay Castle and church on Sunday, 29 May. Gill has kindly done most of the arranging.

Meet at the castle entrance on the bend of the village street at 1.30 pm, with parking along Main Street.

Steve Parry of MOLA will be guiding you around the castle. He has recently led a project examining the castle using both an aerial survey and geophysical survey (see below). These surveys have uncovered a series of walls and surfaces within the castle. An article will appear in a future journal.

At 2.45 pm we leave the castle and go to the church gateway for 3.00 pm.

A tour of church will be accompanied by tea and cake and will be followed by a short film by Mike Lee

There will be a charge of £8.00, which includes the tea. Please email Rob Atkins at [ratkins@mola.org.uk](mailto:ratkins@mola.org.uk) or phone on 01604 264549 to reserve a place,

**Recent publications**

***Exploring Towcester's Hidden Histories***

B L Giggins & A M Howard

This is a must read book for anyone wishing to have an informed introduction to the history of Towcester.

Although Towcester is one of the oldest towns in Northamptonshire, it does not appear to be so from first impressions, even though well over half the buildings surrounding the market square were built before 1750. There remain only a few buildings where timber framing is still visible, but these allow us to peep through the veneer of the more recent façades now covering many of them and gain a tantalising image of how the town may have looked in times gone by, as long ago as the 1600's in some instances. A major source of the material

used, is a series of individual articles written over several years by Brian Giggins for the Towcester Town Crier quarterly magazine. These articles were written about a wide range of topics covering social issues, buildings, military, archaeology and the town's history. Further information and illustrations have been taken from the research work of the Towcester Historic Survey group.

The 132 page book is a well-researched and illustrated introduction to the town, of particular interest to anyone not familiar with the history of Towcester, but also containing many revelations, new even to established residents. It is written in a style conducive to easy reading a section at a time, comprising a series of five walks taking in the buildings of interest. Four of the walks guide the reader into the town along the main roads and a fifth circumnavigates the town centre. The stories behind many of the town's buildings and sites of historic interest are described and chosen with care to ensure that for the majority of them there is something still to be seen.

Throughout the book old photographs, reconstruction drawings and reports from surveys accompany current photographs of the buildings, to enable the reader to understand the changes that have taken place over time. These are augmented with descriptions of how the buildings have been used during their lifetime as inns, domestic dwellings etc.

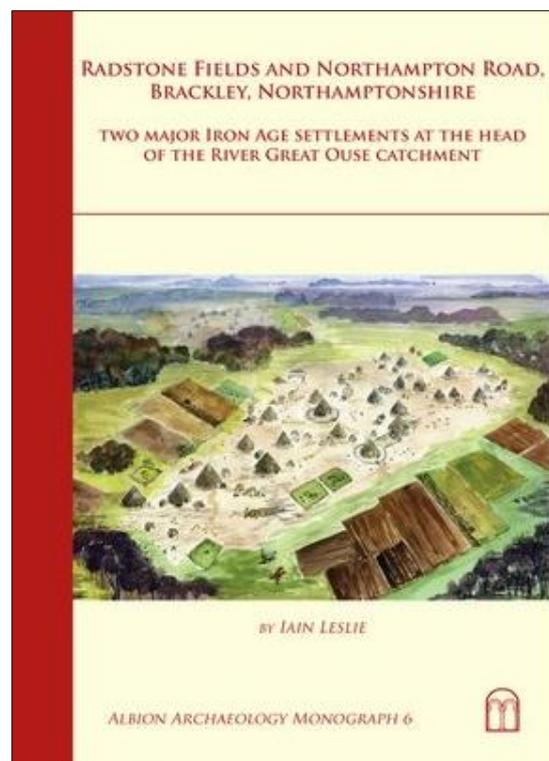
To set the scene, the book opens with a concise history of Towcester and Watling Street from pre-Roman times to the middle of the last century. Following the five guided walks, the final section covers a more in depth history of Watling Street, the most enduring feature of the town.

*Exploring Towcester's Hidden Histories* costs £10.00 and is available from Towcester Library Towcester Museum and Colemans Stationers, Towcester. A M Howard

## **Iron Age settlement**

*Leslie, Iain, 2021 Radstone Fields and Northampton Road, Brackley, Northamptonshire: Two Iron Age Settlements at the Head of the River Great Ouse Catchment, Albion Archaeology Monograph, 6*

This Albion Archaeology monograph presents the results of investigations undertaken as a result of two housing developments in Brackley. It gives a comparative overview of the excavations, looking at the nature of two extensive middle Iron Age settlements and their inhabitants, and examining their place within the wider landscape of the region.



The settlements contained numerous roundhouses as well as a wealth of storage pits and post-built granaries. More enigmatic features included several stone-lined pits and a stone-lined ditch. The evidence tells the story of two relatively large, rural settlements that were geared towards arable production - part of a series

of similar inter-related settlements along a tributary of the River Great Ouse.

It can be ordered via the Albion Archaeology website: [Albion Archaeology Monographs 6 & 7 Now Available — Albion Archaeology](#), for £15.00 plus £3.50 p&p.

Copies of reports on two other Northamptonshire excavations by Albion Archaeology are also still available:

Albion Archaeology monog, 4, 2019 *A Romano-British Settlement and Cemetery at Higham Road, Burton Latimer, Northamptonshire*

Albion Archaeology monog, 5, 2020 *Bourton Way, Wellingborough and Station Road, Higham Ferrers: Two Middle Iron Age Settlements Overlooking the River Nene in Northamptonshire*

### **What did the Romans do for us?**

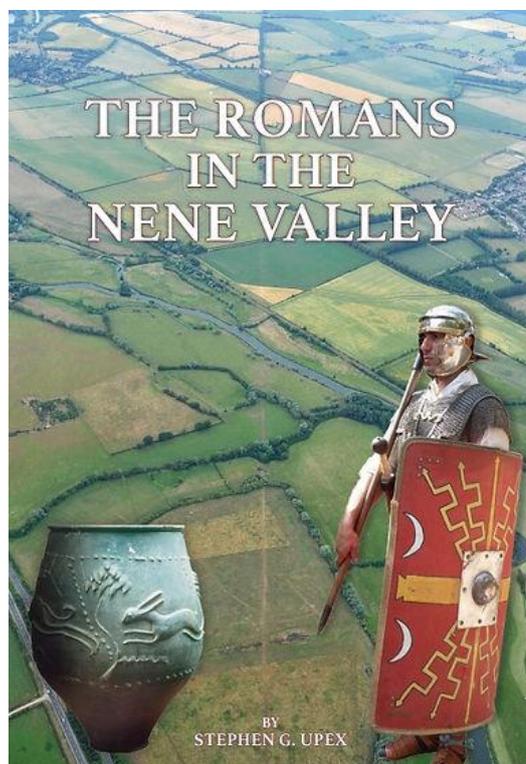
This is one of the questions asked by Stephen Upex in his new publication "*The Romans in the Nene Valley*". Published jointly by the Nene Valley Archaeological Trust and the Nene Park Trust, this is the first book for the general reader that explores the history of Roman Britain in the area covering Peterborough and the villages of the lower Nene valley.

The book incorporates evidence from recent archaeological excavations and discoveries, giving a comprehensive account of the Roman presence in the Nene valley to the west of present-day Peterborough. From the late Iron Age to the very end of Roman rule, the book conveys the nature of everyday life in Roman Britain focussing especially on the importance of the local town of *Durobrivae* (near Water Newton) and its surrounding industrial areas.

There are chapters on life before the Romans, the Roman invasion of 43AD, the gradual growth of the town and the important pottery and iron-working industries that developed around it.

The book explains how *Durobrivae* became an important industrial centre, conveniently situated on the main transport routes of Ermine street, running north to Hadrian's Wall and south down to the capital *Londinium*, as well as the nearby river Nene.

The book's 73 pages contain detailed photographs, illustrations and maps that bring this period to life. Stephen Upex is a leading authority on the Roman and early Anglo-Saxon periods in the Peterborough area, having excavated, written about and researched it for over 40 years. This new book will be of major interest to anyone living around Peterborough wishing to know more about local history and gain an insight to the intriguing questions that are still unanswered.



It costs £15.00 including postage, and an order form is available on the Nene Valley Archaeological Trust website: [www.nenevalleyarchaeology.co.uk](http://www.nenevalleyarchaeology.co.uk)

## Northamptonshire Adult Learning Summer Term Archaeology Courses

The new Northants Adult Learning programme for the summer term has recently been announced and contains two interesting archaeology courses.

**Roman Art and Archaeology** is a 6-session course that looks at Roman art and material culture from circa 200 BC to AD 400. The course, which is led by two tutors, Michael Curtis (archaeology) and Caroline Hawkins (art), explores 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, the course discusses urban life, religious beliefs and funerary practices, political ideology and cultural identity. The course starts on Tuesday 19 April, is classroom based at Chester House beginning at 2pm.

The second course, taught by Michael Curtis, is set in the world of Minoan Crete. **The Minotaur & the Labyrinth** is an online course that introduces Minoan archaeology looking at the people, life on the island, religious cults and practices, trade and commerce in the period from c.3000-1100 BC. The course also discusses the early excavators and the influence which their interpretations have had on our perspective of life during these times. This course comprises four evening sessions and starts on Tuesday, 7 June.

For more information and to register for these courses please visit:

<https://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/cou>

[ncilservices/children-families-education/adult-learning/Pages/default.aspx](https://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/ncilservices/children-families-education/adult-learning/Pages/default.aspx)

## Everyday Heritage Grants:

### Celebrating Working Class Histories

In late February Historic England announced new funding, their

[Everyday Heritage Grants: Celebrating Working Class Histories](#).

Funding will be for community-led and people-focused projects that aim to further the nation's collective understanding of the past. These grants will focus on the heritage that links people to overlooked historic places, with a particular interest in recognising and celebrating working-class histories. This includes council estates, pubs and clubs, farms, factories and shipyards - places where people lived, worked and played for centuries.

Historic England is particularly interested in funding smaller grass roots projects of less than £10,000 and projects that provide volunteering opportunities for young people or people facing loneliness or isolation.

Grants amounts up to £25,000.

Applications open. Deadline Monday, 23 May 2022

Sources: *Heritage Update 462, 25 February 2022 & Historic England*

## 2026 Deadline Lifted for Registering England's Footpaths

Good news for users and enthusiasts of our public footpaths. The proposed Government deadline to register England's footpaths has been cancelled after a public access campaign which called for the Government to prioritise people's access to nature and improvements to health and wellbeing.

*A statement from Defra says - 'We will repeal the 2006 cut-off date for recording historic rights of way, as set out in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to allow more time for paths to be identified and added to the public rights of way network.'*

The deadline of January 2026 had meant that any paths not applied for by that date would no longer be able to be added to maps based on historical evidence and risked being lost forever.

The removal of that deadline gives more time for paths to be protected. According to the Ramblers Association, it will *'also help ease the pressure on under-resourced local authorities, who need to process all the claims for missing rights of way.'*

A spokesperson from DEFRA has also reportedly confirmed that the Government has decided to forward a streamlined package of measures to help enhance the way rights are recorded and managed.

*Sources: Heritage Update 462, 25 February 2022 & The Ramblers Association.*

## Michael Gove 'drops' Ox-Cam Arc

Government officials have reportedly informed local authorities that it has dropped the idea of a centrally driven project to create an 'arc' of development delivering up to a million homes between Oxford and Cambridge. There has apparently been a change of approach since Michael Gove was installed as the Secretary of State at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)..A report by the Chief Executive of South Cambridgeshire Council believes that the government does not wish to see the Ox-Cam Arc as a project driven by central Government.

The effect on Northamptonshire, which has in the past has been seen by some as a potential beneficiary (or victim) of Arc generated growth, remains to be seen.

*Sources: IHBC Newsblog 25 February 2022 & J Gardiner, building.co.uk*

Graham Cadman

## AND FINALLY.....

If you have any items you would like included in either the next NAS NEWS or our Facebook page contact:

Andy Chapman

NAS secretary and journal editor

NAS email: [NAS196674@gmail.com](mailto:NAS196674@gmail.com)

## Old Towcester

Brian Giggins

For many people, archaeology and local history can be very dry subjects. Facts are revealed through excavations, documentary research, building surveys, previous histories, maps etc., but the results will seldom provide the reader with a good idea of what life was like for the average person in Towcester at a particular period. The evidence for this seldom exists. To try and overcome this I am experimenting with some fictional writing set in the town that will, as far as possible, illustrate the results of excavations and historical research. For ease of the reader, modern place names are used.

### The Roman Tavern Keeper's Story

*It is now AD 203 and our island's tribes south of the Firth have been under Roman jurisdiction for over a century and a half. A traveller, who has walked from Fenny Stratford (Magiovinium) to Towcester (Lactodurum), is in a tavern (1), where he is drinking cheap wine and being talked at by the owner, a man who always has plenty to say. The traveller had just asked the tavern keeper how long he had been in Towcester:*

"Me, I suppose I must have been here about 20 years now, although I wasn't from here originally. I came from another town called Alchester. My old town used to be a fort for the Second Legion and when I left there were still a few legionnaire's families in the town (2). These families used to tell me about the blood and guts military adventures of their relatives, but I am sure they were just filling the ears of a young lad with a good yarn. Where is Alchester you ask? Well, it is a solid days walk in the direction of the mid-day sun. There's a good road just outside the West Gate (3), the one that crosses over the brook then up the hill past the metalworkers' huts. Only the gods know why they chose to build in that boggy area! (4) Then up through the old villa grounds (5) and the forest to the south (6).

When I came here as a youngster, there weren't no town walls and I could walk directly to my old town. When they dug the town ditch and

erected the walls about a decade ago (7), the direct road to Alchester was cut off by the new ditch causing the detour through the West gate. When making the defences the army cleared some people out of their houses and then demolished them so they could get the line they wanted and to build the gates. My word, did they carry on! That was the time that the authorities were scared about the tribes to the east of here who were threatening revolt (8). Mind you, it was good for trade having all those soldiers in the town and there were a few nights when they drunk me dry.

It is not easy for me now, not since my wife and son died two years ago. I buried them both on the edge of a plot of land that I have down where the Alchester road crosses the brook (8a). It's very pleasant there. What I, or they, had done to offend the household gods I don't know. The times have been hard ever since.

I did get a slave, a surly Germanic male captured by the army some years ago. He was cheap and I soon found out why. No matter what I did I could not get him to work properly. Whipping had no effect, so in the end I had to get rid of him. Sold him to a merchant passing through the town who reckoned he could sort him out. Wonder if he ever did! Help with the amphorae and drunks would have been useful!

Yes, we do have some quite good baths in the town; these are down the road towards London (9). I use them most days, as do most of the other tradesmen in the town. Of course, they are noisy and it is a good idea to take your own *strigil* (10). Most of the town's business is unofficially carried on there as our so-called Forum (11) is not up to much. One of the slaves stoking the hypocaust suddenly died the other day. The wood he was burning was very green and they think that he was overcome by the smoke. They did not find out about him until the customers at the baths started complaining about the lack of heat and steam.

Like most other tradesmen I have had my time with the Watch (12). For some reason, I usually ended up at the south gate, closing the gates and dropping the bar across to secure them at sunset. Almost always there was a hammering on the gate shortly afterwards with an imperial messenger demanding entry as he had to get to Chester or Leicester and needed a fresh horse

from the Mansio (13). There were also the merchants carrying their stocks of wares up from St Albans or London, pleading for admittance as they didn't want to spend a night outside the gates for fear of being robbed.

I must admit, the walk around the walls from one gate to the next was usually very pleasant as you avoided the muck and mud accumulating in some of the lanes and also the smells from the streets. Looking down on the garden and paddocks, the ditch on one side and the roofs of the shops and houses on the other, with the Temples just a bit higher than the rest, is quite a sight as the sun goes down. At the same time the wall beneath your feet does give you a sense of security and protection.

Although I am not sure that I believe in the old gods so much now, I still go to the temple nearest the West Gate and make my offerings (14). You can never be sure and I don't want things to get worse. A few not too dear gifts cannot do anything but good.

Well, I expect you will be making your own offerings at one of the town's Temples to keep you safe on the next stage of your journey. It has been good talking to you and hearing about what is happening down the road at St Albans. Sorry about the dormice, hopefully we'll have some ready by the next time you call in".

#### Notes:

- (1) The 1976 Park Street excavations found pits containing a large number of flagons suggesting a nearby tavern.  
George Lambrick, *Excavations in Park Street, Towcester, Northamptonshire Archaeology*, **15**, 1980, 35-118
- (2) Eberhard W Sauer, 2006, *Origins and Destiny of Oxfordshire's earliest Roman Site, Oxoniensia*  
(<http://www.oxoniensia.org/volumes/2006/sauer.pdf>)
- (3) Not proved but likely to have been close to the Methodist Church, Brackley Road
- (4) Excavated 1968 near the junction of York Close & Buckingham Way.  
A E Brown and C Woodfield, *Excavations at Towcester, Northamptonshire: the Alchester road suburb, Northamptonshire Archaeology*, **18**, 1983, 3-140
- (5) Burcote Wood Farm Villa excavated the 1970s.

Roy Turland, *Excavations of a Roman Settlement: Wood Burcote, Towcester*, 2017 Private Publication

- (6) Whittlewood Forest
- (7) Charmian Woodfield, *The Defences of Towcester, Northamptonshire Archaeology*, **24**, 1992, 13-66
- (8) This theory has not been proved.
- (8a) Waitrose Car park – isolated burials set on the edge of plots found in 1998 excavations.  
Alex Thompson and Pat Chapman, *Roman settlement and burial at Water Lane, Towcester, Northamptonshire: Excavations 1997-98*, Northamptonshire Archaeology report, **13/01** (Copy available from Andy Chapman at [NAS196674@gmail.com](mailto:NAS196674@gmail.com))
- (9) There was a Roman building with baths under St Lawrence Church.
- (10) A strigil was a curved blade to scrape sweat and dirt from the skin.
- (11) Not the council building but administrative and judicial buildings set around a square, which acted as a market place. If Towcester had one, its location is unknown.
- (12) We do not know if Roman Towcester had a Watch to man the gates and walls, but it is a possibility.
- (13) A Mansio was an official stopping place on a main road for the use of officials and those on official business. Lactodorum would have had one but its location has not been identified.
- (14) A small section of a possible octagonal temple was revealed in the 1976 Park Street excavation

Note: Articles from the journal *Northamptonshire Archaeology* are available online from the Archaeology Data Service (<https://doi.org/10.5284/1083067>)

**Brian Giggins**