

# THE FIELDWORKER

## LEICESTERSHIRE FIELDWORKERS NEWSLETTER

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March 2017



LEICESTERSHIRE  
FIELDWORKERS

40th Anniversary

### 1. THE NEXT MEETING: PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF SPEAKER

The next meeting will be on **Thursday March 16<sup>th</sup>** at the Jewry Wall Museum, St Nicholas Circle, Leicester, Le1 4LB. The speaker will be **Professor Julian D Richards** on the '**Viking Camp at Torksey, Lincolnshire**'. From AD 865 to 874 the so-called Viking Great Army wreaked havoc on the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, leading to political conquest, settlement on a substantial scale, and extensive Scandinavian cultural and linguistic influences in eastern and northern England. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records its movements, key battles, and where it over-wintered, but we know little more about it. The location of one over-wintering, in 873-4 AD, has been investigated at the neighbouring sites of Repton and Heath Wood in Derbyshire. The location of the winter camp from the previous year, 872-3 AD has now been located at Torksey, in Lincolnshire. A five-year evaluation project carried out by a team from the Universities of Sheffield and York has recently been completed and this presentation will report their findings and examine what the project can tell us about the Great Army and its impact.

Julian D Richards is Professor of Archaeology and Director of the Archaeology Data Service at the University of York. He co-directs the Viking Torksey project with Professor Dawn Hadley of the University of Sheffield.

Julian was originally scheduled to speak on May 18<sup>th</sup> but is unavailable on that date. We are very grateful to Jeremy Taylor for facilitating the change of date.

### 2. DIARY DATES FOR 2016-7 (at Jewry Wall Museum at 7.30pm unless otherwise advised)

May 18<sup>th</sup>: Dr. Jeremy Taylor on 'Middle and Late Iron Age Leicestershire'

June 15<sup>th</sup>: Annual General Meeting

September 21<sup>st</sup>: Prof David Mattingley: Dust, donkeys and drones: new fieldwork in the Moroccan Sahara.

November 16<sup>th</sup>: Mathew Morris: Recent Excavations in Roman Leicester

### 3. EXCAVATION NEWS

**University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS)** have been very busy with two big urban sites as well as a number of others around the County and beyond. At **Appleby Magna** an evaluation was undertaken in the rear gardens of properties fronting Top Lane and its 17th century properties within the Appleby Magna Conservation Area and with a moated site, including fishponds, a formal garden and settlement earthworks to the rear. There was good survival of medieval ditches, including a curiously curving number and other features including a possible metalled surface and pits, likely either relating to the manorial site or belonging to the substantial 17th century frontage properties.

At **Pickwell** trial trenching revealed an Iron Age site with a roundhouse and ancillary features within an enclosure consisting of four further ditches. Not far to the east of this, a Roman stone building (a 'villa') was exposed, complete with collapse indicating it had a tiled roof, and a good amount of ironstone rubble and mortar. The building as exposed is more than 12.5m long, of a mortared ironstone build and with internal floor surfaces and occupation deposits surviving, despite being just under the plough soil. We only saw the south-east corner of the main structure so cannot be sure of the form in plan of the building. Just to the east is a further parallel wall-footing. Initial spot dating suggests a late 1st to mid-2nd C date. This may be part of a larger site identified by fieldwalking to the south. At the other end of the site were further features suggesting a further Iron Age enclosure with some occupation material.

At St Mary's Church, **Melton Mowbray**, a watching brief during the laying of a new floor has revealed 40 tombs. No burials will be disturbed.

At **Asfordby** the truncated remains of a Bronze Age barrow have been uncovered. The two **Leicester** sites are the biggest since the Highcross excavations. On the old Stibbe factory site between **Great Central Street and Highcross Street** a large excavation straddles parts of three Roman insulae (the eastern edge of insula IXa, much of IXb, and the northern edge of insula XVI). The earliest evidence is pointing towards timber structures of a mid to late 1st century AD date, including a timber structure of beam slot and posthole construction. A rather wonderful lime kiln pit is another highlight. A late Roman building occupies the junction of the E-W and N-S streets, along with a larger late building further north. At the north-end of the site, a large high-status building continues to be investigated. This contains heated rooms and at least four rooms with mosaics. Most rooms contain large tesserae with plain or checker patterning, but one room contains a very well-made mosaic with small tesserae with various geometric patterns (including four strand guilloche, peltae, and swastika meander). Expert opinion is that this mosaic floor is equivalent in quality and workmanship to the Peacock pavement, indicating it is one of the highest status Roman floors thus far found in Roman Leicester (extending over 8 metres in length). If the opportunity arises there will be a tour of the site later in the year. Meanwhile, on the other side of **Highcross Street** excavation is now in its final weeks. Since the Fieldworkers visit, the mosaic has been successfully lifted and has travelled down to Northampton for conservation. Work on site has now seen the Highcross Street frontage stripped and recorded. Sadly, much of the new area has been largely destroyed by medieval pits. Little islands of Roman stratigraphy survive in places, and some nice bits of 2nd century timber buildings have been identified, but it appears there are no more substantial Roman stone buildings on this side of the site. Excavation is now focused in the corner of Highcross Street and Vaughan Way, recording the Roman building beneath the 1960's piling scheme. Floor surfaces and internal features, including a small area of hypocaust, are all being carefully unpicked. First impression is that this building is probably a town house set back some distance from the street edge, and we are starting to get hints of earlier timber buildings underneath. A few nice medieval features have also been excavated, including a stone-lined pit which contained three intact late 13th/14th century flagons. Another pit has produced pieces of a composite bone comb. These appear to lie within narrow burgage plots extending off Highcross Street. No evidence for the town or county gaols has been found yet, but we do have one wall that we believe relates to St John's Hospital, Leicester's first medieval hospital.

**Albion Archaeology** are close to completing their excavation at Manor Farm, **Market Harborough**. The core area is an unenclosed mid – late Iron Age farm that continues into the Roman period when rectilinear enclosure boundaries and drains surround the site. A pit alignment runs down to the site excavated recently at Lubenham Hill.

**MOLA** are evaluating a rectilinear Iron Age farm site at **Great Glen**. No Roman material as yet.

**Phoenix Archaeology** are stripping a pit alignment in the area into which **Bardon Quarry** is due to expand

**Wessex Archaeology** continue their excavations in advance of the **East Midlands Gateway**. South of Lockington they are excavating a pair of burnt mounds straddling a stream and an Iron Age farmstead. On another site they are excavating an Iron Age farmstead with pit alignments, while south of **Hemington** they are excavating another pit alignment on an extensive Iron Age site and a Roman farmstead. Finally on the linked **Kegworth By-pass** scheme another Iron age site is being evaluated.

#### 4. **BIG HISTORY QUIZ – March 15<sup>th</sup> Jewry wall Museum**

On March 15<sup>th</sup> Jewry Wall Museum will be holding their next Big History Quiz. Doors open at 7pm and the quiz commences at 7.30. There is a bar. Entry is only £1 and teams, groups and singles are all welcome.

5. **INTRO TO LEICESTERSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY COURSE AT MELTON CARNEGIE**

Peter Liddle is running his Introduction to Leicestershire Archaeology course at Melton Carnegie Museum starting on April 20<sup>th</sup> running for 6 lectures (no lecture on May 11<sup>th</sup>). The course starts with the evidence for the earliest humans in Leicestershire and covers all periods up to the end of the medieval period. The course costs £30 or £6 for individual lectures. Contact Peter (details below) for further information.

6 **FESTIVAL OF ARCHAEOLOGY 2017**

This year's Festival runs from the 15<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> July. The 2017 Festival is shaping up very well with many events already confirmed and a lot more in the pipeline. Further ideas are always welcome. Contact Peter for more details.

7. **MEMBERSHIP AND FACEBOOK**

Members who have not paid since last June have now been removed from the list. The Fieldworkers Facebook page can be found by searching for 'Leicestershire Fieldworkers' when in Facebook and applying to join. It is a closed group.

8. **CBA CONFERENCE**

East Midlands CBA will be holding a conference on '**Manufacturing through the Ages**' at Derby Moor Community Sports College, Moorway Lane, Littleover, Derby, DE23 2FS on **Sunday 26th March 2017**. This conference will explore various aspects of manufacturing from the Bronze Age through to the 20th century. Bookings should be sent by 17th March 2017 to: Carolyn Chenery, Hon Treasurer, 37 Brookside, Rearsby, Leicestershire, LE7 4YB. Please note that confirmation of your booking can only be supplied via e-mail or SAE. It costs £12 for CBA members. Buffet lunches cost £7. <http://www.archaeologyuk.org/cbaem>

9. **CHARNWOOD ROOTS HERITAGE FESTIVAL**

The Charnwood Roots Heritage Festival will be held on **Sunday 21 May 2017**, 10am – 4pm, at Beaumanor Hall, Woodhouse, Leicestershire. Charnwood Roots is exploring the history of Charnwood Forest and the towns and villages that surround it, and will be celebrating this history in a one day event in May. The centrepiece of the festival will be a large exhibition showcasing some of the research compiled by over 600 volunteers. This covers the period from medieval times to the present day. Films of the community test-pitting undertaken in Rothley, Whitwick and Anstey, and of historical research techniques and archaeological surveys, will be shown during the day, along with clips from oral history interviews. There will also be talks by guest speakers on the history and archaeology of Charnwood Forest. Other features of the day include an outdoor area of archaeology displays and living history, and displays by local history and heritage groups. A children's area will include history games, hands-on archaeology, and adventure stories in which they can take part themselves. To join the mailing list for more details nearer the time, see [www.charnwoodroots.org](http://www.charnwoodroots.org). The Fieldworkers will be running a stall.

10. **MARTIN LUTHER AND THE EAST MIDLANDS**

The one-day conference to mark the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginnings of the Reformation is being held at De Montfort University, Leicester on **30<sup>th</sup> September 2017** from 10am – 5pm with speakers including Richard Buckley, Deirdre O'Sullivan and Chris Brooke. The conference, including lunch and refreshments costs £25 waged or £20 for concessions. Details from Prof Elizabeth Tingle [elizabeth.tingle@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:elizabeth.tingle@dmu.ac.uk)

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