

THE FIELDWORKER

LEICESTERSHIRE FIELDWORKERS NEWSLETTER

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1. THE NEXT MEETING – PLEASE NOTE NEW VENUE

The next meeting will be on **Thursday November 16th** at 7.30 when **Professor Mike Parker Pearson** will speak on **The Beaker People: migrations, mobility and diet in prehistory**. Mike is Professor of Later British Prehistory at UCL's Institute of Archaeology and is, perhaps, best known for his work on Stonehenge (which is what he spoke about when we saw him last). He was Project Leader of a multi-disciplinary and multi-institution project to understand the Beaker phenomenon. The Beaker folk have been one of prehistory's best known ancient peoples, buried with their distinctive pots and other grave goods throughout Britain and continental Europe. But who were they? Were they really a separate ethnic group? And where did they come from? The Beaker People Project set out to answer some of these questions, using a battery of scientific methods – strontium, oxygen, carbon, nitrogen and sulphur isotopic analysis, dental microwear analysis, and osteological studies – to reveal much about the lives of these people who lived and died around 4,000 years ago. Coupled with new results of ancient DNA analysis, these discoveries have transformed our understanding of these people and their era, at the transition from the Stone Age to the Bronze Age.

The meeting will be held in **Lecture Theatre 2** in the **Centre for Medicine, University of Leicester**. This is the striking new building on the corner of University Road and Lancaster Road. Lecture Theatre 2 is on the first floor but there is a lift. Reception is also manned until 10pm. Parking will be available across the road in the Medical Sciences Building car park on the left side Lancaster Road from University Road. It is intended that this will be our regular lecture venue. A picture of the venue and car park are on our website.

2. DIARY DATES FOR 2017-8

January 18th: Mathew Morris: Recent excavations in Roman Leicester

March 15th: John Thomas: The Iron Age cauldrons from Glenfield Park

May 17th: Peter Liddle: Excavations at Thistleton – a Roman town, villa and temple.

3. EXCAVATION NEWS

At **University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS)** Richard Buckley has now become sole Director with the retirement of Patrick Clay. Vicki Score has been appointed Deputy Director.

At **Brooksby Quarry** more evidence of early human activity has been recovered, including a couple of quartzite secondary flakes, and two exceptional hand axes, both of quartzite and very fresh.

At **Cadeby Quarry** a large ploughed out round barrow, represented by a substantial ring-ditch approximately 30m in diameter, has been found with a scatter of post holes, and a cremation burial on the NW side of the ring-ditch. A later pit alignment cuts across the ring-ditch. In other areas Roman kilns, some very well preserved, and features containing kiln waste have been revealed, along with a general scatter of pits and a series of Roman ditches, possibly related to field boundaries. Also two sunken featured buildings of Saxon type have been excavated.

At **Bath Lane, Leicester** a stretch of the town defences has been revealed and a Roman building is represented by various patches of floor, including a large well-preserved area of opus signinum. The south-eastern portion of the site is dominated by medieval pits and a strange industrial-looking feature containing a whole pot! There is also a rather lovely

medieval stone well. On the north side of the site, a number of poorly preserved graves denote a cemetery, probably associated with either the lost church of St Clements or the Blackfriars. The eastern section has a medieval drain and wall running off towards the north-east that could also be associated with the friary. Close by, at the proposed **Waterside Development area** evaluation has been completed both within the town defences and north of them up to Frog Island. Within the defences there was complex (likely deep) Roman stratigraphy, suggesting town houses. Outside there was dense archaeology on the free draining gravel terrace, mostly of Late Iron Age and Early Roman date. Close to the river flooding became a problem in the Early Roman period. Complex multi-period occupation was found along Northgate Street from the Roman period onwards. This archaeology has suffered from varying degrees of truncation. Finally, deep channel deposits associated with the previous courses of the River Soar were found, although mapping and dating of these deposits is problematic.

At **Lubenham** several closes were identified running back from Westgate Lane occupied by possible house platforms and a number of drainage ditches forming east-west aligned tenement plots. A substantial north-south ditch defined the western village boundary and draining into the River Welland to the south with smaller ditches extended east to Westgate Lane, forming tenement plots. An absence of features from the ditch-defined platforms suggested an agricultural rather than occupational purpose. A post medieval building was excavated on the eastern site boundary which overlay a medieval structure and pitting. A second cottage has been identified and will be investigated on a forthcoming watching brief. At **Pickwell**, further trenching close to a previously excavated Roman site revealed a possible hearth and ditches. At **Rothley** evaluation, including fieldwalking and geophysics, in advance of a large housing development south of the village has led to 35 trenches, of which 5 contain archaeology. These trenches coincide with the more convincing geophysics results and have revealed at remains of at least one roundhouse and several ditches which are associated with Iron Age pottery. At **Melton Mowbray** an Iron age and Roman site has been excavated.

Witham Archaeology have revealed an interesting site on the edge of **Gilmorton**. Closes and enclosures with a possible timber structure on the street frontage is associated with handmade Anglo-Saxon pottery and slightly later material.

Cambridge Archaeological Unit have been excavating at **Greetham Quarry** and have found a prehistoric field system as well as 2 sunken featured buildings associated with handmade Anglo-Saxon pottery, loom weights and antler combs.

Oxford Archaeology have been working on a pipeline and have excavated Iron Age and Roman features near **Great Bowden**.

4. **HALLATON EXCAVATION**

Hallaton Group returned this year to the St Morrell's Chapel site to look particularly at the Roman deposits. Across the eastern part of the site was a thick Roman layer, perhaps a levelling layer or even possibly a garden or agricultural soil. There were also plenty of other Roman features, including a large ditch running along the western part of the site which had a post-hole on the side suggesting it might have been fenced. The buttress and 'plinth' to the east of the medieval chapel were uncovered again and Roman ditches were also identified running underneath these features. Interestingly excavations beneath the east wall found a cobbled surface at the base of the Roman layer which continued towards the plinth. Skeleton 12 was expertly cleaned, excavated and lifted to join the other 11 Skeletons for analysis and the skull of a 13th was uncovered on the east side of the church. Like the previous skeletons the grave was full of stone with one being used as a pillow for the head. The churchyard wall was found to have a curved corner. Despite some very wet weather all of the recording was finished on time and the trenches backfilled. As ever, the excavations were directed by Vicki Score, taking time out from her ULAS job.

5. MARSH COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY AWARD

As the newsletter is almost completed we hear that Vicki Score has won the Council for British Archaeology Marsh Award for Community Archaeologist of the Year 2017. Brian Marsh and Dan Snow presented the award at the Linnean Society in London.

6. CASTLE HILL COMMUNITY EXCAVATION

The second season of the Castle Hill Community Dig was extremely successful. The main focus of this year's project was the excavation of a 10 x 20m trench around a large square footing that was found last year. This revealed the northern end of a substantial building, 8m wide and over 5m long, with fragmentary stone footings and areas of stone and clay floor and a large hearth area. The building has some complexity to it, a curious square platform has been added on to its eastern side (evidence for a staircase perhaps?) and there are two distinct phases to the hearth, with the final phase showing evidence that it was used for metalworking. The building had been deliberately demolished and was surrounded by a smashed layer of roof slates and glazed ceramic ridge tiles. A stone-lined well was found adjacent to the building's north-eastern corner. The top 1m of the lining had been robbed out and backfilled with building rubble. Lodged in the shaft at the bottom of the rubble was a group of waterlogged timbers which appear to be parts of a roof, perhaps coming from the excavated building. The site's outer ditch was enormous and too deep to bottom safely (before it filled up with water), and it had two terminals leaving a c6m wide causeway through the ditch line. Elsewhere, it was confirmed that an earth mound in the centre of the site was just a pile of earth dug out of a nearby pond, not a barrow, while an area of medieval quarrying was identified in the monument's north-western corner. The fifth trench was negative.

7. LOCAL GROUP NEWS

The Oadby and Wigston Group have started the season strongly with fieldwalking on the Stoughton Estate. Eight fields near Little Stretton have been walked by a total of 22 different members of the Oadby & Wigston Fieldworkers over recent weeks. A number of Roman finds were made, including Grey Ware, White Ware, Mortaria, Samian and Nene Valley, although not as much as might have been expected since it was close to the Roman road. Most of the finds were medieval scatter - Potters Marston, Lyveden Stanion and Midland Purple - probably from manuring, which is consistent with other fields walked in the area. Plans are in place to walk a number of other fields over the winter months.

Hallaton Fieldworkers have undertaken test pitting at Keythorpe Hall and have been fieldwalking with more work planned.

Harringworth Fieldwork Group meet every Sunday at 10.00am with finds washing at other times. Please contact Sarah Chambers if you would like to join us. Email sarah2chambers@icloud.com or telephone 01572 747315. A short winter programme of talks has been prepared, commencing in November with Richard III. In December the talk is about Sir Christopher Hatton and Kirby Hall. In January 2018 there will be a Flint Knapping demonstration, and in February 2018 a report of the work being carried out ahead of mineral extraction in Wakerley Parish

The Rutland Local History and Record Society's Archaeological Team have now commenced this season's field walking by continuing with their Ridlington survey.

8. Melton Group Lecture

Dr Gavin Speed of ULAS will be speaking on "**New Light on Ratae Corieltavorum: Recent archaeological discoveries in Leicester**" at **Melton Carnegie Museum** on Wednesday 22nd November at 7.00 pm. I'm sure everyone remembers the exciting Stibbe excavations that Gavin directed. This costs £5 with doors open at 7.00 pm for a 7.30 start. Limited places are available – please book early to avoid disappointment on 0116 305 3860.

9. **CBA East Midlands Conference**

On Sunday 26th November 2017 the CBA East Midlands will be holding a conference entitled 'Recent Fieldwork in the East Midlands' at the Wilson Auditorium, Oakham School, Ashwell Road, Oakham, LE15 6QG. It runs from 9.45 to 4.30 pm. It has many local speakers, including Richard Thomas on Bradgate, Mathew Morris on recent work in Leicester, John Thomas on the Iron Age site at Kirby Muxloe, Debbie Frearson and Elaine Jones on Life Before the Royal Forest of Rutland and Bob Trubshaw on Project Gargoyle. Full details at <http://www.archaeologyuk.org/cbaem/cba-em%20events.htm>

10. **LATEST LEICESTERSHIRE MUSEUMS ARCHAEOLOGY NEWS**

Leicestershire Museums have recently acquired an interesting silver seal matrix found by a metal detectorist in Cotesbach. The 14th century object is inscribed '+SECRETUM: ACE' suggesting it is some sort of secret seal. The ACE may refer to the owner's name. The middle of the seal is set with a red jasper intaglio showing an eagle standing on a hare or branch and may be a lot older than the Medieval setting. The object will go on public display for the first time at Harborough Museum, Market Harborough from Thursday 9th November. For any community archaeology or archaeological collections enquiries contact archaeology@leics.gov.uk.

11. **NEW PUBLICATION – FISHING AND MANAGING THE TRENT**

Lynden Cooper and Susan Ripper have published the work undertaken in the quarries around Castle Donington in a new publication called '**Fishing and Managing the Trent in the Medieval Period (7th–14th Century) - Excavations at Hemington Quarry (1998–2000), Castle Donington, UK**'. One of the first discoveries occurred at Hemington Quarry in 1985: a 12th century mill dam and vertical water mill. An ongoing watching brief recorded many riverine structures and culminated in the discovery of three medieval bridges. The present book describes the discoveries from 1998 to 2000 of numerous medieval riverine structures. Three fish weir complexes of the late 7th-12th centuries produced rare evidence for the capture of migrating silver eels. A 12th-century mill dam was later reused as a basket fishery. A series of stone and timber bank-side structures of the 14th century reflect a change in fishing technology: the cribs were used to manage the river and provide river conditions suitable for net fishing. The work was a collaboration between ULAS and local community archaeologists, notably Dr Chris Salisbury. The book is published by BAR and costs £20. Details at <http://www.barpublishing.com/fishing-and-managing-the-trent-in-the-medieval-period-7th14th-century.html>

Lynden also has a paper in the Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society - Making and Breaking Microliths: A Middle Mesolithic Site at Asfordby, Leicestershire. Please contact Lynden on lpc2@leicester.ac.uk if you want to know more.

12. **MEMBERSHIP**

Renewing memberships have nearly died away completely with around 60 people left now to renew. Those in arrears will receive an email in December and will be removed from the lists if nothing is received. Please let Kathy know on info@leicsfieldworkers.co.uk if you do not wish to renew. 6 Postal members will have received a form with this newsletter but will not be reminded further due to cost. Be warned – your Fieldworker will cease!!

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