

# THE FIELDWORKER

## LEICESTERSHIRE FIELDWORKERS NEWSLETTER

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FIELDWORKERS

### 1. THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be on **Thursday May 17<sup>th</sup>** at 7.30pm. **Matt Beamish** of ULAS will speak on **Ipads, volunteers, LiDAR and Radar: exposing the Historic landscape of Martinshaw Wood, Groby**. Work undertaken by ULAS for the Charnwood Roots project involved the analysis and transcription of numerous potential archaeological features across Charnwood from aerial LiDAR data, recorded by the Environment Agency and now freely available for research. Martinshaw Wood near Groby contained a large number of potential features and was chosen for a ground testing exercise run by Matthew Beamish and Julie Attard, along with volunteers within the Charnwood Roots Scheme. In 2015 and 2016 the wood was visited by teams armed with paper maps and Ipads, on which the features were visible over Satellite Imagery of the wood. Field notes were made and photographs taken as features were identified. These records were then imported into a custom database linked with a GIS in order to interpret the data. In April 2018, Magnetometry and Ground Penetrating Radar was undertaken within a well-preserved banked and ditched enclosure within the wood, and results from the work are now being analysed.

The meeting will be held in **Lecture Theatre 2** in the **George Davies Building, 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 of Lancaster Road from University Road and is also available after 6pm on the road. It is intended that this will be our regular lecture venue. A picture of the venue and car park are on our website. If you haven't been to a lecture recently you will be impressed by our new surroundings!

### 2. DIARY DATES FOR 2018

June 21<sup>st</sup> : Peter Liddle: Excavations at Thistleton – a Roman town, villa and temple.  
September 20<sup>th</sup> : Andrew Fitzpatrick; Julius Caesar in Britain  
November 15<sup>th</sup> : TBA (Gavin Speed is deferring his talk until analysis is further advanced)

### 3. EXCAVATION NEWS

**University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS)** continues to work at full stretch. The large excavation on the east side of **Bath Lane, Leicester** is now complete. The town defences were found on the west of the site, marked by the rampart and associated ditches and the unmortared granite foundations of the wall, some 3m wide. East of this was evidence of early quarrying with post holes perhaps representing Iron Age activity (seen on the site to the South). The site was then levelled with hearth-like features and then a Roman building on an East-West axis, with lines of wall plaster marking the clay walls. An *opus signinum* floor, some 9m x 6m marked an important room. To its west were 2 further rooms and a possible corridor; while to its east was a room with a mortar floor set on stone fragments. Beyond this clay walls with painted plaster show the complex continued to the east. The building suffered from subsidence into the underlying pits and a thick clay deposit was laid down before a mortar floor was installed. A well preserved wall, at least 20m long, seemed to mark the northern boundary, perhaps associated with a street to the north.

Overlying this, and separated by a thick layer of soil with possible evidence of timber buildings, was a complex of stone buildings, mostly Danehills sandstone, probably part of the Dominican Friary. A narrow North-South corridor may be part of the cloisters, east of which were drains and pathways, including a slate-capped drain traced for some 30m to the west. Some 50 burials were found at the north end of the site and are thought to be associated with the lost church of St Clement. Other features included possible paths or causeways.

Meanwhile, on the West side of **Bath Lane, Leicester** machining has been completed to link up with an earlier excavation on part of the site. Despite disturbance, including cellars, there are early indications of further structural elements of the substantial Roman building identified in

2008. These appear to include robber trenches, likely forming part of a corridor on the eastern side of the building, as well as traces of further walling and several patchy areas of mortar flooring.

In the same area work continues on evaluation in advance of the **Waterside Development**, much of this in the area between the town walls and Frog Island. West of **Northgates** complex archaeology includes building plots, stone walls, wells, rubbish and cess pits. As ever, features are better preserved away from the modern road frontages where Victorian buildings stood. Foundations of the Great Central railway viaduct have also been uncovered, and a well preserved Roman masonry building. Trenches in the **Corporation Yard** found the town defences. A splendid Victorian wharf was also uncovered. Medieval soils sealed well-preserved Roman deposits.

The most recent machining over the footprints of the proposed new commercial buildings has revealed more of the well-preserved medieval structural/domestic activity, including a stone lined well, masonry and possibly clay-walled structures and evidence of another oven, along and set back from **Northgates** and the heavily disturbed frontage. Stripping continues in the southeast corner of the development area over the site of the Roman masonry building where much of the archaeology has been erased by further viaduct abutments. Some surviving Roman stratigraphy related to the building has been identified, including floor levels and these are being cleaned and characterised in preparation for excavation.

At **Diseworth** evaluation revealed a ditch and part of a fishpond. Pottery recovered was mostly Saxo-Norman in date. At **Donisthorpe** the excavation of a system of Roman enclosures associated with a metalled trackway was completed. At **Great Bowden** evaluation produced gulleys and ditches associated with 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> century pottery and a quern. This lies across the road from earlier Roman discoveries.

**Allen Archaeology** have started the area strip of a site at **Leicester Road, Melton Mowbray**, where previous evaluation showed the site to contain an extensive landscape of Iron Age settlement, multiple ring gullies, pits and boundary ditches, likely to represent a long-lived, phased settlement site akin to the agglomerated settlement sites reported at Humberstone Farm and Beaumont Leys.

#### 4. LOCAL GROUP NEWS

**Oadby & Wigston Fieldworkers** are taking a well earned rest, having bravely walked a record number of fields over the early spring, some times in very unfriendly weather. They will be spending the next few meetings identifying and recording finds

**Thurcaston and Rothley Group** have also been into the field and are starting the process of washing and identifying the finds.

#### 5. COMPUTERISED FIELDWALKING RECORDS

In March we had a most successful meeting to review the work that Mike Bruce has completed on computerising the fieldwalking diary and analysis sheets. It was agreed that these would be adopted as the countywide standard and Vicki Score volunteered to look into how this might be linked to a mapping package. A further meeting will be called when there is progress to report.

#### 6. ANOTHER DIGGING CHANCE

**Bosworth Links Test-Pitting (21<sup>st</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> July)**. A second season of test-pitting in Market Bosworth will be over the weekend of 21-22 July. There is still time to get involved, by joining a digging team or being a finds washer, please register at <http://marketbosworthsociety.com/volunteer/>

#### 7. OAKHAM CASTLE COMMUNITY DIG

ULAS have recently finished a very successful two-week community dig at Oakham Castle in Rutland. The project, run in partnership with Rutland County Council and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, aimed to reinvestigate two areas identified by Time Team as having significant archaeological potential. In all, 50 volunteers took part in the dig.

North-east of the Great Hall, the gable-end of a long narrow building was excavated. In places, the walls still stand to waist height, but whilst built of stone, construction was crude and the building only had an earth floor. Current thinking is that it was probably one of the many service buildings which would have occupied the inner bailey, perhaps a stable or workshop. Excavation

revealed that it had gone through a prolonged period of neglect and reuse before it was eventually demolished. This fits documentary sources which suggest that buildings in the castle were in poor condition by the end of the 14th century, ruined by the end of the 16th century and demolished during the early 17th century.

West of the Great Hall, in the area purportedly occupied by a detached solar block, excavation revealed a complicated sequence of buildings with evidence for multiple phases of rebuilding. The working theory is that there are stone buildings constructed against the curtain wall, with one (perhaps the solar) linked to the hall via a pentice walkway. At a later date at least one of these buildings and the walkway were demolished and replaced with a large timber-post built structure which rested on large square padstones.

As yet, not enough evidence has been found to say exactly what these buildings were used for. However, finds of decorated green-glazed table wares, dress pins, an iron knife, high-quality masonry and elaborately decorated glazed ridge-tiles all suggest that use of these buildings was of much higher status than that of the building north-east of the hall. A contrast further emphasised by the plainer kitchen wares, large quantities of animal bone (waste from the castle's kitchen) and simpler ridge-tiles which were predominant in the finds assemblage from the area north-east of the hall. It is hoped that we will return for a second season next year, meanwhile more information on the project can be accessed here <https://ulasnews.com/tag/oakham-castle/>

## 8. **MEDIEVAL EARTHWORKS OF SOUT & SOUTH-EAST LEICESTERSHIRE**

The long awaited final volume in Robert (Fred) Hartley's medieval earthworks series has gone to the printer and will be available soon. The first volume (Rutland) was published by Leicester Museums in 1983 – so our publication of the Harborough earthworks will mark the end of a 35 year enterprise!

9. **LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND FESTIVAL OF ARCHAEOLOGY** The Festival, the main part of which will run from July 14<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup>) with a Launch Event on the 8<sup>th</sup>, will have around 80 events so there should be something for everyone! The leaflet has now gone to the printer (although other events can be added to the website) so leaflets will be available very soon. Please let us know if you need any for an event. We are keen to have a craft element in the Launch Event. If anyone can help with a traditional craft activity such as spinning, pottery making etc please contact Peter (details below).

10. **GODDARD EXHIBITION**. On 7th June there is a Henry and Joseph Goddard exhibition on 'Country Houses' at the old HSBC/Midland bank building, now run by ISKCON, 31 Granby Street, Leicester. Architect Joseph Goddard designed the clock tower, the Thomas Cook offices and this building as well as many more important Leicestershire buildings. If you would like to go please email [jaapalberts@iskconleicester.org](mailto:jaapalberts@iskconleicester.org) as he needs to know numbers attending. There will be refreshments. We don't currently have times but we will put a post on the front of the website about this as soon as we know more.

11. **EMAIL** Finally, you will know we have had problems getting emails through to some of you. Although a couple of emails still went to the spam box last time the issues seem to be sorted out by adding new protocols behind our website and to the host servers. (Many thanks to Kathy's ex-colleague in ICT, Gareth, for assistance). Only Hotmail appears to be slightly 'temperamental' despite the people at Hotmail doing their part as well. There's currently nothing more we can do about this. The tightening up of spam across all email providers inevitably results in some legitimate emails going to spam and you should therefore check your spam box regularly and add known senders to your contact list.

The General Data Protection Regulation also comes into force shortly. As membership is due in June Kathy will be sending out new forms with this information included on it plus our data policy.

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