

NASNEWS

Newsletter of the Northamptonshire Archaeological Society

Website: www.northants-archaeology.org.uk

May 2011

THE AGM

It seems a long time ago now, but on a snowy evening at the end of November we held our AGM, for the second year, at the Humfrey Rooms of the Northamptonshire Natural History Society. This was also a book launch for *Dennis Jackson: A Northamptonshire Archaeologist* (see below), and the latest journal, volume 36, was also available for members to collect.

Despite the weather, we had a good turnout. David Neal, as requested by Dennis, provided an excellent annual lecture, *Roman Villas and Mosaics in Northamptonshire and Region*, and opened with his remembrances of Dennis, which go back to the days when David Neal ran the Ancient Monuments Drawing Office, and Dennis was one of the excavators requiring illustrations while working on his reporting backlog.

THE JOURNAL

Volume 36 has been distributed to all of our members and also to all of our institutional members in Britain and abroad. If any paying member has not received a copy please email me.

Contributions to volume 37 are being collected now; either full reports or shorter notes are all welcome. Free to local societies and individuals (if not of excessive length) with the results of commercial archaeology being published at a page rate to cover printing costs.

THE NAS COMMITTEE

At the AGM the following members were standing for re-election to the committee: Secretary and journal editor - Andy Chapman, Membership secretary - Pat Chapman, Treasurer - Ian Barrie (see below). Other committee members: Steven Hollowell, David Waller, Graham Cadman, Roy Friendship-Taylor, Brian Giggins.

All were re-elected unopposed, and no one came forward to offer their services to the vacant post of Meetings secretary, which is why we are still unable to offer a programme of regular lectures as we would wish to do.

For the coming year, Steven Hollowell will continue to act as Chair: and David Waller as Vice-chair.

NAS TREASURER

As no one came forward at the AGM to offer their services, Ian Barrie is continuing to act as the Society Treasurer. But we are still hoping that someone will come forward to learn the ropes from Ian with a view to taking over as Treasurer by the end of the year. Any potential volunteers please contact the secretary, Andy Chapman.

LOCAL STUDIES BECOMES DISCOVER

The old Local Studies section of the Central Library, Northampton, which used to be at the top of the stairs, has been relocated to the basement. The new room, branded **DISCOVER**, has new shelving, new carpets and new furniture. Also note that the photocopier is a Multi-Functional Device (MFD) and in addition to plain photocopying you can plug in a memory card or a flash drive and scan documents and photographs as digital images or to pdf files. While it may not have the atmosphere of the old place upstairs, I was most impressed by the new setting, and have checked that the back copies of the journal are safely installed in their new home.

DENNIS JACKSON: A Northamptonshire Archaeologist

Sales of Dennis's book to both the membership and the general public have been disappointing. We are only just approaching 100 copies sold from a print run of 500, which means we have recovered less than a quarter of the publishing cost. But the real losers are not the society but the potential readers who are missing out on such a good read.

Recently, the Chronicle and Echo gave Dennis and the book two pages of coverage, and included full details of availability, but even this failed to produce a surge in orders.

Archaeologist pens new book charting important Northamptonshire excavations

Nearthing the secrets of county's past

WHEN writing about the British Iron Age in the early 1970s I once bewailed the lack of evidence from the East Midlands, but was quickly taken to task by a friend from Northampton who said that you must meet Dennis Jackson. He is totally revolutionising things these days, he said, and I recalled archaeology expert Professor Henry Gamble.

Writing in the preface to Dennis Jackson's newly published, autobiographical book about his prolific career excavating sites across Northamptonshire, the University of Oxford professor continued: "How right she was - by the end of the 1970s Dennis had excavated 17 Iron Age settlements. More were to follow in the next two decades and the total now stands at more than 40.

Working at a time when many important archaeological finds were at risk of being destroyed by large-scale quarrying work, Northamptonshire archaeologist Dennis Jackson soon made a name for himself at a national level for his industrious devotion to saving the county's history.

He worked hard to excavate complete settlements, such as those at Teywell, Hirstcock, Wakerley, Aldwincle, Greenham and Wootton Hill Farm.

The 83-year-old from Abington finished school at the age of 14 and went into the building trade, but eventually left work as a brickwork contractor to carry out archaeological work full time from the 1960s.

For many years he was the only full time field archaeologist in Northamptonshire and "drew himself" into the task of finding and saving as many sites as he could.

Dennis, who has just released his work Dennis Jackson: A Northamptonshire Archaeologist, said: "I became an amateur archaeologist in the 1960s and in 1965 carried out my first excavation for which I was paid. This was on a site disturbed by roadworks at Upton.

I was paid by Oxford University and received the grand sum of £25 for a month's work.

"For the next 15 years I became a self-employed professional archaeologist working initially for the Ministry of Works (now English Heritage).

"Between 1966 and 1975 I was the only full time field archaeologist working in the county, although I did persuade Northampton Development Corporation to employ an archaeologist when this body was set up around 1970.

"During those nine years I was allowed to work anywhere where there was a threat to archaeology in the county, but most of the time I was working on the ironstone and gravel quarries, and it was a hectic time with sparse resources."

Dennis has been a long time member of Northamptonshire Archaeological Society and its members decided to fund the publication of this book in order that his huge contribution to knowledge about Northamptonshire's Iron Age history might be known.

The society's secretary and journal editor Andy Chapman said: "I think this project came through Dennis' son saying to him 'you have a good story, write it down.'"

"When he started back in the 1960s there were very few people doing it. Development work was building up and there wasn't any archaeological coverage apart from individuals who decided to do something. "If he hadn't given up his proper job as a builder there would have been several important sites which would have been bulldozed away. He did a lot of work around Curby when the ironstone quarries were in place and also along the Nene Valley. He published more than 80 reports in the society journal."

Although today archaeological work is woven into the planning process, in the 1960s this was not the case.

Andy said: "There was no structure in place and no funding so Dennis was heavily involved with working with Northamptonshire County Council. Throughout the late '60s there was a realisation that a lot of sites were being lost. "Dennis would work almost on his own, perhaps with a few workmen to help or people helping at the weekends. Otherwise he would just carry on on his own. Nowadays you would have a huge team of people. "In those days there was no right to go and do this and it very much relied on the good will of people on the quarries."

Dennis' work had a huge impact on what is now known about certain periods of the county's history, according to Andy.

He said: "Throughout Northamptonshire there is known to be an Iron Age settlement every kilometre and previously no one had any idea there was such a population. We now know Northamptonshire was being intensively farmed. There would have been a farm group with their roundhouses, growing crops."

The book can be purchased, priced £14.95, plus £2.50 postage and packing, direct from www.northantsarchaeol.org.uk.

Alternatively it is available to order through Amazon.com, or by writing to The Northamptonshire Archaeological Society c/o Andy Chapman, Bobbin House, Wootton Hill Park, Northampton, NN4 6EE.

Dennis Jackson with his new book.

By Anna Brosnan
anna.brosnan@northantsnews.co.uk

Why we need a county museum

THE finds uncovered by Dennis Jackson's excavations between the 1960s and 1980s eventually made their way to various museums such as those in Kettering and Northampton, while others are reported to have simply gone into storage.

According to Andy Chapman, secretary and journal editor at the Northamptonshire Archaeological Society, the sheer volume of un-displayed finds makes a great case for the need for a county museum.

He explained: "We don't have a county museum in Northampton so a lot of materials are in storage in a warehouse in Daventry as there isn't a home for our archaeological discoveries. "We would be keen to inspect some sort of archaeological museum but these days we would need a few million to erect this sort. "People still don't think of Northamptonshire as a historical county, but there is a rich archaeological heritage. People like Dennis accumulated a lot of material which could be displayed just to bring stored in boxes."

Dennis Jackson agreed adding: "There should be a proper museum to display these finds, that would be a lot better than what there is now."

1) Dennis Jackson's oldest site was a Neolithic mortuary near Aldwincle (1968-9). As the contents lay two burials, placed there 5,000 years ago.

2) Dennis pictured in 1950 watching road construction on the M40 in South Northamptonshire.

3) During construction of the A65 west of Northampton in 1965, near Upton Church, Dennis started his professional career excavating Iron Age and Saxon remains.

4) Wakerley, 1971: Dennis is best known in the archaeological world for excavating Iron Age settlements, particularly in advance of ironstone quarrying.

Roman furnaces uncovered by roadworks

THROUGHOUT his new book Dennis Jackson discusses the many fascinating excavations he has been involved with.

In this regard, high on my list of sites was the work we carried out at Aldwincle (Thrapston gravel quarry). As a boy I used to play on two mounds not knowing that they were buried mounds dating back to around 2,000 BC. It was pure coincidence that I should come back many years later to excavate them.

"At Aldwincle we had a number of discoveries which were unique at the time. This included two Neolithic burials dating to the 3rd century BC which were the oldest in the county at that time. As well as a good plan of an Iron Age roundhouse and other features, we found the remains of a Roman timber bridge at the quarry which created a lot of interest. "Other important excavations included the complete Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Wakerley and a number of Iron Age Roman settlements, chiefly in the north of the county. "Roadworks at Laxton in 1985 revealed a row of exceptionally large Iron smelting furnaces dating to the early Roman period. There were at least five furnaces with each measuring some 1.4 metres internally, compared to an average of 0.5m known from other elsewhere. The quantity of slag and rubbish material produced by them filled a whole valley."

We are reoffering the members discount at £12.50 plus £2.50 p&p. Please see the attached order form for further details.

Help the society recover its costs and have an entertaining and informative read, much more interesting than reading site reports. Take it with you on holiday for your summer reading.

SUMMER EVENTS

Stanwick Lakes

Stanwick Lakes Rangers contact telephone 01933 625522

Website <http://www.stanwicklakes.org.uk>

A Walk Through Time

Saturday 21st May 2011, 2pm - 4pm

Discover the history of Stanwick Lakes with archaeologist Andy Chapman.

£1.00 per person, free to members

Booking recommended

Step Back into the Iron Age

Saturday 28th May 2011, 11am - 4pm

Re-enactors bring Stanwick Lakes' Iron Age Roundhouse to life, with a chance to have a go at traditional Iron Age crafts including grinding corn on a quern!

Heritage Day

Thursday 1st September 2011, 10am - 4pm

Did you know that people have lived at Stanwick lakes for thousands of years? Find out all about them and what they did! This event is in partnership with Northamptonshire County Council Archivist and Heritage Services.

A Walk Through Time

Saturday 24th September 2011, 2pm - 4pm

Discover the history of Stanwick Lakes with archaeologist Andy Chapman

£1.00 per person - Free to members - Booking recommended

Portable Antiquities Find Surgery

Saturday 12th November 2011, 1pm - 3pm

If you have found any man-made objects over 300 years old, bring them to be recorded by the Northamptonshire Finds Liaison Officer at his finds surgery

STANWICK LAKES ROUNDHOUSE

On the 17 March Stanwick Lakes issued the following News Release

Fire at Iron Age Roundhouse

'Burnt but not beaten' is how the team at Stanwick Lakes has responded to the arson attack on the new Iron Age roundhouse at the site. The fire severely damaged the roundhouse, completely destroying the thatched roof, but the main skeleton remains, and it is hoped that something can be salvaged so that the community heritage project can proceed as planned.

"Hundreds of school children, people from the local community, and our own dedicated volunteers have all worked hard to build the Roundhouse, so it's very upsetting that this has happened," said Project Co-ordinator, Liz Williams, "but we are determined not to let the few spoil things for so many. We will re-build what we can, and still plan to hold our Iron Age community events later this year."

Note to editors:

The Iron Age Roundhouse was built by volunteers at Stanwick Lakes over the winter on the site of the original Iron Age settlement, using natural materials all gathered at the lakes. On the night of Wednesday 16 March the Fire Brigade was called to attend a blaze caused when persons unknown set light to the newly-thatched roof.



Local school groups had helped with the daubing



Pat and Andy Chapman went along to help the Friends of Stanwick Lakes with the thatching on the Tuesday



By the end of Wednesday the thatching was nearly complete



On Wednesday night, the day before the house would have been completed; it was set on fire by vandals - all the thatch was lost and the timber frame was damaged

Having shared a little of the experience of building this roundhouse, I have no repeatable words to express my contempt for the sad individuals who did this. However, the frame still stands and will be given a temporary cover for the open day at the end of May. Northamptonshire Archaeology will be putting a Raunds display in the Visitor Centre.

THE PREBENDAL MANOR, NASSINGTON

<http://www.prebendal-manor.demon.co.uk/>

Monday, 30th May 1-5pm

Adult £7.00 Child £4.50 Family Ticket £21.00 Concession £19.00

A monk herbalist and apothecary with medicinal cures, medieval beauty treatments, and vermin control.

Tithe Barn Museum Talks

Saturday, 11th June 10am

King Cnut

Dr Sam Newton has published many books on Anglo-Saxon England. He is currently a director of Wuffing education at Sutton Hoo, a NADFAS speaker, and a Time Team historian. King Cnut visited Nassington, which was one of his royal villas. Sam will be giving a lively lecture on this great Scandinavian king.

Pre-booking essential. Tickets £28.00 which includes morning coffee, lunch and an afternoon lecture. Contact 01780 782575

After lunch the day will continue with Forgery, Fact, Fiction and Archaeology.

The Reconstruction of Anglo-Saxon Peterborough

Dr Avril Lumley Prior attained an MA in 1999 followed by a PhD on the 'Forged Charters of Peterborough Abbey' in 2006. She has published numerous papers on local history. She is currently conducting research on pre-Conquest Peakirk, Cambridgeshire.

Saturday, 2nd July 2pm

Death in the Garden

Michael Brown MA is a garden historian, who has a great deal of knowledge about the history and plant uses in the Medieval and Tudor periods. He will be giving an illustrated lecture in the Tithe Barn Museum on deadly and dangerous plants, with tales of murder, myths and magic.

Cost per person £10.00, which includes tea. Pre-booking is essential. Tickets can be obtained by contacting the Prebendal manor. 01780 782575

THE PREBENDAL MANOR, NASSINGTON continued

An Archaeological Trail

Sunday 17th July 1 - 5 pm

Adult £5.00 Child £2.00, Family ticket £11.00

The National Archaeology Festival. The Prebendal Manor and Tithe Barn Museum will be holding an exciting family archaeological trail around the site, with lots of artefacts to find and name, games to play and prizes to win.

THE END OF HERITAGE AT NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL?

With the latest reorganisation within the County Council the successful combination of the *Historic Environment Record*, the *Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS)*, *Northamptonshire Archaeology* and the *Record Office* under the management of Sarah Bridges, who actually cares about the services and the staff, has been broken up by relocating *Northamptonshire Archaeology* to a new department.

The bringing together of these services under a single sympathetic manager had been a great success, and was a further move away from the days when the county council had made itself a national disgrace in the archaeological world by opting out of providing planning advice as well as winding down *Northamptonshire Heritage* to a bare minimum of staff.

This break up is just another small sign of the times nationally, and the prevalent view that heritage and culture are luxuries that we can only afford in times of prosperity is sad and misguided. Much damage is being done across the country to already hard-pressed services, and things will get far worse before the cuts come to an end. It is just a matter of how terminal some of that damage may be. It is easy to cut but far more difficult to rebuild services that had evolved over several decades.

FUTURE NAS MEETINGS

Despite not having a Meetings secretary we are currently planning or planning to be involved, in a number of events.

We hope to have a table at the Heritage Fair to be held 10th September, at the Holy Sepulchre Church, Northampton (St Sep's).

We will be having a joint meeting with the Northamptonshire Branch of the Historical Association in February 2012. The speaker will be Professor Chris Dyer of Leicester University on the subject of 'The origins of the English village (700-1200) revisited'. This talk will have many links with Northamptonshire through the work of both the Raunds Area Project and the Whittlewood Project, both of which have contributed greatly to the understanding of village origins.

We are also hoping to repeat our Archaeology Day, as held in the spring of 2008, as a gathering of local archaeological/historical societies. This is provisionally pencilled in for spring 2012, probably at a location at the other end of the county, perhaps Oundle.

Of course, our AGM will be in November as usual, hopefully with another journal to collect on the day.

NAS Secretary and journal co-editor:
Andy Chapman, c/o Northamptonshire Archaeology, 2 Bolton House,
Wootton Hall Park, Northampton, NN4 8BE
achapman@northamptonshire.gov.uk