



NASNEWS

Newsletter of the Northamptonshire Archaeological Society



Website: www.northants-archaeology.org.uk

August 2014

Chester Farm visit

Our visit to Chester Farm (Irchester Roman town) on Saturday 7 June was led by Sarah Bridges, of Northamptonshire Record Office, who is also leading the NCC project to turn the farm buildings into a heritage centre, including converting one of the barns into the, much needed, archaeological archive store. This store will hold and provide access to material currently either in temporary store at Daventry, or held by the numerous commercial contractors who work in the county (with much of the Roman material from Stanwick villa held by English Heritage at Portsmouth).



Despite the persistent rain, members also had a chance to view the early stages of this year's training excavation, led for the NCC by staff from MOLA Northampton, with students from Leicester University and volunteers from Higham Ferrers Archaeology and Research Society (HiFARS).



NAS membership fees

With rising postage costs in particular, the committee has decided that, after many years without an increase, we do now need to raise the membership fees by £2, for single members and £3 for family membership. Could all members with standing orders please update the amounts as follows:

Membership	Current	New
Individual	£10	£12
Student	£8	£10
Family	£12	£15
Local Association	£5	£8

We hope our members will understand the necessity for this and will continue to support the society.

NAS AGM, November

John Williams has accepted our invitation to be the guest speaker at the 40th anniversary AGM in November with 'Reflections on Medieval Northampton'. Hopefully to be held at the Northampton Natural History Society rooms, as in recent years, date to be arranged.

John Williams was head of the Northampton Development Corporation Archaeology Unit in the 1970s & 80s, where he was responsible for the excavation of the Palaces site, lying east of St Peter's church, with its timber and stone halls of the 8th and 9th centuries, which established the importance of Northampton in the middle and late Saxon periods. John was therefore working in Northampton when the society was founded, and the NDC archaeology unit submitted numerous reports to the journal between the mid-1970s and mid-1980s. He was also involved in establishing the county archive that was held by the Borough of Northampton, until their policy change at the beginning of the 1990s.

Northamptonshire Archaeology

We have plenty of material for volume 38 of the journal, but I have not progressed with the preparation as I would have wished. It is therefore unlikely that the journal will be available at the AGM, as we usually achieve, and the aim will be to have it available as early in 2015 as possible. On the positive side, work on the Northampton special edition is already in progress, so there will not be another two-year wait for the volume after.

Northamptonshire and Heritage

Why is it that when it comes to Heritage, Northamptonshire only hits the national (and in this case, with the added attention of the Egyptian ambassador, international) headlines for the wrong reasons?

I hope that most of our members will be aware of what has happened through both local and national media.

I was wondering how to sum up the events surrounding the sale of Sekhemka to an anonymous private buyer, so that it may now be lost to any future public viewing, and the consequent loss of Arts Council accreditation for Northampton Museums and Art Gallery for five years, which means it will not be able to apply for various publicly funded grants.

And then the latest issue of *Private Eye* arrived (No. 1372, 8-21 August) and solved my problem (see below). It provides both a succinct summary, which I couldn't improve on, and a cartoon.

Let us hope that the example of Northampton may deter other authorities from thinking that sale of artefacts is a sensible way to supplement their budgets.

If you want to follow the coverage provided online by the BBC follow this link: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-northamptonshire-28602849>

PYRAMID SCHEME

NORTHAMPTON's Museum and Art Gallery has been stripped of official accreditation – leaving it ineligible for all grant funding for the next five years – following the controversial sale of its 4,400-year-old Egyptian statue to a mystery private buyer. The Arts Council said the sell-off by Northampton borough council (NBC) risked undermining trust in public collections.

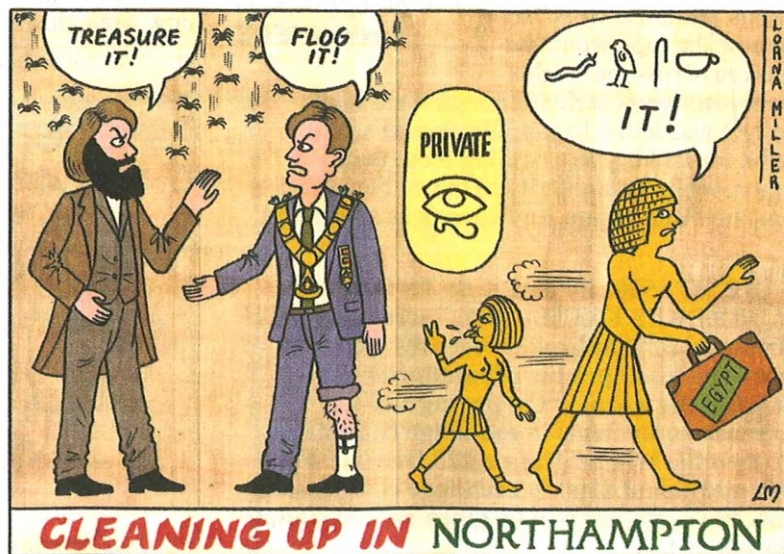
The limestone statue of Pharaonic scribe Sekhemka, gifted to the people of Northampton by the 4th Marquis of Northampton in 1880, fetched £15.8m at auction last month. Spencer "Spenny" Compton, the 7th Marquis, takes 45 percent of the funds raised after cutting a deal to drop a legal challenge to NBC's sale (*Eyes passim*). Auctioneer Christie's confirmed the statue was sold to a private collector who wished to remain anonymous, meaning the statue may never be seen by the public or scholars again.

The museum was due to get a £70,000 grant to put photos of its shoe archive

online. The total amount of grants withheld is unlikely to outweigh the funds raised by the sale, but it will make it a lot less profitable.

The Arts Council's export licensing unit said Christie's wasn't obliged to tell it if a valuable work was bought by an overseas buyer, and the process of getting permission to take an object abroad remains confidential until a decision was made by the culture secretary.

Meanwhile, Northampton locals are keeping careful watch on other treasures in the museum, including a collection of valuable ceramics which was recently moved into storage.



Deserted Medieval Villages

From English Heritage: A series of deserted and shrunken medieval villages in Northamptonshire have been designated as scheduled monuments by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, on the advice of English Heritage.

They are amongst the best-preserved lost villages in the county and have been chosen for special protection because of the exceptional survival of their earthworks and buried remains, revealing the layout of the settlements as well as the ways in which their shape and size changed over the centuries. The sites include: Little Oxendon (*below*), Walgrave, Steane, Clipston, Horton, Ashby St Ledgers and Kirby.



The earthworks have lain largely undisturbed by later occupation, since the villages were deserted and then often used for grazing. Their archaeological remains have the potential to reveal many more details about the social and economic development of these communities, and the physical earthworks allow us to experience the spaces in which medieval people farmed and made their homes in the English landscape.

The deserted medieval villages were assessed as a defined area survey which drew on surveys and research carried out since the 1980s and recent aerial photographic reconnaissance and site inspections. An important part of this new assessment has been to include the surviving ridge and furrow of the associated field systems and not just the village earthworks.

For further details see: <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/about/news/deserted-medieval-villages-in-northamptonshire/>

CLASP AGM, Monday, 22 September

At Harpole Bowls Club, Larkhall Lane, Harpole, with guest speaker Andy Chapman on the subject: '*In search of Northampton Castle*'.

The castles of the East Midlands and East Anglia, 26-28 September

This weekend course is taking place at the University of Cambridge, Institute of Continuing Education (ICE), 26-28 September, beginning with dinner on the Friday and ending after lunch on the Sunday. The fee for the course is £250. Madingley Hall is a beautiful 16th-century country house set in seven acres of gardens landscaped by "Capability" Brown. Accommodation is available in one of the Hall's 62 en suite bedrooms, and meals from its award-winning kitchen are included in the fee. For full details visit:

www.ice.cam.ac.uk/castles

Becket's Flit, Saturday, 11 October

The Friends of the Chicksands Priory will be holding a Study Day at the priory, Shefford, Bedfordshire, SG17 5PR, commemorating the visit by Archbishop Thomas Becket 850 years ago.

In the Autumn of 1164 Thomas Becket escaped from Northampton and King Henry II to exile in France. Aided by Gilbert and the Gilbertines his journey in October by way of Chicksands was one of risk, hardship and high drama featuring distraction and disguise.

The study day will explore the unique story of Becket and the Gilbertines. All are welcome including Friends, family, serving personnel, guests, local residents and interested parties.

The speakers will include Dr John Williams, head of the Northampton Development Corporation Archaeology Unit in the 1970s & 80s and latterly County Archaeologist for Kent, on the subject, *Northampton and Canterbury in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries*. Further details from: friendsofchicksands@gmail.com

ANCIENT CRAFTS WEEKEND
SYWELL COUNTY PARK
20-21 SEPTEMBER

We will celebrate 40 years of NAS with this public event, but we need as many NAS members as possible (and their friends and neighbours) to come along to support us. And if you are coming, why not book a place on one of our prehistoric pottery or flint knapping workshops and get hands on with your archaeology.

Programme

Saturday, 20 September

Graham Taylor: Potted History
Pottery workshops

A potter and experimental archaeologist, whose replica pots are in museums across the country.



Make your own prehistoric pottery tool kit, scraper, decorating comb, twisted bark cord. Then prepare some raw clay, build a pot and finally decorate it.

Prehistoric pottery workshops (for over 16s, maximum 12 per workshop),

Morning 10.00am-1.00pm
Afternoon 2.00-5.00pm
£10 per session (see booking form)

Completed pots can be left at Sywell to dry, and on Sunday, 28 September, Andy Chapman will be at Sywell from 10am to fire the pots (why not bring some potatoes and sausages as we will have a

readymade barbecue from the firing).

James Dilley: Ancient Craft
Stone Age Living History

Presented in costume, including replica Stone Age house, artwork and artefacts; with flint knapping demonstrations. Content to suit all ages from 8 to 80.



Guarderobe: The Past in Practice
The medieval craftsman

Paul and Alex Thompson, archaeologists and re-enactors, will demonstrate a range of medieval crafts, including leather working.



Sunday, 21 September

**James Dilley: Ancient Craft
Flint knapping workshops**

Learn ancient techniques using hard and soft hammers to make a range of flint tools from prehistory.

Morning 10.00am-1.00pm

Afternoon 2.00-5.00pm

£10 per session (see booking form)

Individual tuition, 8 per group, aged 14 through to adult (safety equipment provided, but be prepared for a few cuts, flint is sharp).



Graham Taylor will be giving public demonstrations of potting, including hands on sessions where you can make a small pot in 10 minutes.

**Saturday and Sunday,
for children and adults:**

**Michael Brown:
The Historic Gardener
Medieval gardens and plants**

Michael has worked extensively on re-creating the garden at Prebendal Manor, Nassington.

Whether you wanted to eat, appear more beautiful, relieve pain, improve a meal or kill a few rats, there were plants for every need.

The Historic Gardener's presentations bring to life in an entertaining, amusing and sometimes surprising way, for adults

and children, the forgotten world and working methods of those who toiled to maintain the pleasure gardens of the wealthy or the peasants who had to grow their own food.



Also:

Making your daily bread, get hands on with the first labour saving device for the prehistoric kitchen, the rotary quern, and see how long it takes to turn grain into flour. This can keep children entertained for hours.

We also hope that on Sunday,

Guarderobe: The Past in Practice

will bring some discipline to proceedings by offering sessions of Roman military drill for children.

NAS will, of course, have a table to advertise the society, and there will be journals and Dennis Jackson's autobiography on sale at bargain prices.

But we need the involvement of our members to make the day a success. We have booked some skilled re-enactors who deserve an audience, and we need to fill the places on the pottery and flint knapping workshops.

There is a booking form on the last page, please use it and have a great day and take away a prehistoric pot or a flint tool at the end of it.

NASNEWS edited by: Andy Chapman

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BOOKING FORM

**ANCIENT CRAFTS WEEKEND, SYWELL COUNTY PARK,
20-21 SEPTEMBER**

Please reserve places on the following workshops:

Saturday, 20 September

Prehistoric pottery workshop, morning place(s)

Prehistoric pottery workshop, afternoon place(s)

Sunday, 21 September

Flint knapping workshop, morning place(s)

Flint knapping workshop, afternoon place(s)

All workshop sessions are charged at £10 per person, provisional bookings by email accepted, but places will only be reserved and confirmed once payment has been received.

Once booked, I am afraid there can only be refunds for cancellations if we manage to rebook the vacated place(s).

Name:

Names of others also being booked into places:

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Address:

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Postcode:

Email: Phone:

Please send cheques or postal orders, made out to Northamptonshire Archaeological Society, to: Andy Chapman, NAS Secretary, 4 Oat Hill Drive, Northampton, NN3 5AL (email: NAS196674@gmail.com)