

Archaeology in Northamptonshire, 1998

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ROMAN

Duston, St Luke's Church environs (L). A Dupondius of Vespasian was found at the west end of the churchyard. Also part of a Niedermendig lava quern was noted, embedded in the eastern boundary wall.

Pytchley, Pytchley Golf Lodge (A.C.) Trial excavation and fieldwalking was carried out by Erlend Hindmarch and Richard Jennings to inform a mitigation strategy ahead of proposed development of a golf course on an area of known cropmarks of presumed Iron Age or Roman date. Trenches were excavated primarily to determine the depth of soil cover, but the recovery of small quantities of pottery from the exposed feature fills indicated that the main period of activity was of Roman date, running from the late 1st to the 3rd centuries AD.

Towcester, Sponne School (A.C.) Geophysical survey and trial excavation was carried out by Joe Prentice and Mark Holmes on the school playing fields across an area of 0.8ha lying 150m outside the defences of the Roman town of *Lactodorum*. No remains or finds of Roman or later date were recovered, and there was no indication that any more recent activities may have removed such evidence.

Towcester, Water Lane (A.C.) Pre-emptive excavation was undertaken by Mark Holmes during the construction of a new Safeway store on land between Water Lane and Richmond Road, just outside the south-western side of the Roman town of *Lactodorum*. Settlement evidence included parts of timber structures, a rectilinear enclosure and the truncated remains of a Roman malting oven. They lay to the west of the Roman Alchester road, a length of which was revealed during the watching brief. Evidence for the Roman defences recovered during the excavations was limited to a series of shallow ditches whilst two further ditches may be associated with the town's Civil War defences. A total of 28

inhumations and one unurned cremation were recovered, probably dating to the late 1st or early 2nd century AD.

West Haddon (A.C.) Trial Excavation was undertaken by Rob Atkins on land along the line of the proposed A428 West Haddon bypass. An extensive settlement comprising a sinuous road flanked by rectangular enclosures had been located by geophysical survey. Nine trenches confirmed the results of the geophysical survey and associated finds suggest that the settlement was perhaps short-lived, dating to the mid-first to mid-second centuries AD.

MEDIEVAL

Ashton, Ashton Manor Moated site (A.C.) Three small trial pits, each 1.5m square, were excavated by Peter Masters on the site of a proposed garage at this Scheduled Ancient Monument (No. 13615). They were up to 1.5m deep, but only one reached natural. The earliest layers comprised dumps of clays with limestone to a depth of 0.80m. Finds were sparse but there was both some medieval pottery and residual Roman pottery. The upper layers contained building material, pottery and other finds of 16th -18th century date.

Brigstock, Latham Road (A.C.) A trial excavation by Rob Atkins on land to the east of Latham Road identified a series of pits; one contained early/middle Saxon pottery and the rest were post-medieval in date. The survival of archaeological deposits was poor, probably due to recent groundworks associated with a car park.

Daventry, The Abbey Centre (A.C.) Evaluation trenches were excavated by Andy Chapman on the site of the former monastic precinct of the medieval Cluniac priory of St. Augustine. They located a small area of well preserved medieval deposits including two substantial, clay-bonded stone walls, 1.25m and 1.50m wide, which were probably demolished in the mid-16th century. They are on the same alignment as the priory church and cloister and are likely to be

parts of former priory buildings, but there was insufficient evidence to determine the plan form. A 12th century ditch and a medieval pit were also located, but extensive areas had been deeply disturbed in the post-medieval period. Some of this disturbance may relate to the known destruction of the last priory buildings in the mid-19th century.

Fineshade, Fineshade Abbey (A.C.) Trial excavation and a subsequent recording action by Joe Prentice and Mark Holmes uncovered the well preserved remains of an iron smelting furnace. It was oval in plan, 1.80m long, with a solidified pool of tap slag in-situ at the western end. A roof tile in the furnace structure indicates a Roman or later date. Nearby pits contained quantities of slag and ashly loams.

Kettering, The Rectory (A.C.) Trial trenching by Michael Webster within the garden of The Rectory, to the east of the Market Place, revealed limited evidence of medieval activity. A linear ditch and a soil horizon only survived beneath demolished post-medieval buildings to the west of the present Rectory. There were no structures along the frontage onto the Market Place. Much of the area was landscaped with garden terraces in the 18th and 19th centuries, and this may have removed earlier evidence.

Northampton, Bridge Street (A.C.) Trial Excavation by Iain Soden at the Kwik Fit site located the well preserved remains of a medieval building fronting onto the east side of Bridge Street. The wall foundations, in unmortared ironstone, and remains of pebble and clay floors were sealed beneath both occupation debris and demolition rubble. The building was constructed no earlier than the mid-13th century and was demolished in the late 15th century. No remains of medieval or Civil War defences were present at the northern end of the site, and no medieval levels had survived in the area closest to the supposed location of St. Thomas' Hospital.

Northampton, Marefair (A.C.) An extensive programme of trial excavation was carried out by Iain Soden within the 1.35ha site of the former Barclaycard premises. The site lies within the core of the late Saxon and medieval towns and across the road from the sites to the east of St Peter's church

excavated by the Northampton Development Corporation in the 1970s and 80s. It was shown that quite large areas of medieval and potentially earlier archaeology survive beneath and around the present building. Medieval activity was represented by numerous rubbish pits and the remnants of both timber and stone buildings, while early to middle Saxon activity was attested only by residual pottery. The site also contains the potential to recover part of a late medieval and post-medieval street frontage along the former Pike Lane.

Northampton, Moat House Hotel (A.C.) The site of a new swimming pool was excavated by Andy Chapman in advance of development. There was extensive disturbance from post-medieval buildings, wells and pits, but earlier deposits survived in three areas. Two pits are dated to the 10th century and provide the first evidence for late Saxon activity in the north-eastern corner of the postulated extent of the late Saxon town. Further pits are dated to the 11th and 12th centuries. In the mid-13th century large quarry pits were dug into the local ironstone bedrock, no doubt to supply building stone; they had been infilled by the end of the 14th century. A direct connection with the 13th century foundation of the Dominican Friary, which may have stood in this area, was not established. The presence of the quarry pits indicates that the adjacent frontage onto King Street was developed no earlier than the 15th century.

Potterspury, High Street (A.C.) Trial excavation by Peter Masters on land adjacent to 47-53 High Street located a pottery kiln and pits and ditches of medieval date. The kiln was not excavated and its full plan was not exposed, but a large assemblage of unstratified pottery was recovered, and has been examined by Richard Ivens. It included over fired and other waste sherds indicating that it was representative of the kiln products. There was a limited range of forms; baggy jugs predominated, but the assemblage also included pans, neckless jars and cisterns. The kiln was probably in use during the early to mid-14th century.

Radstone, St. Lawrence's Church (A.C.) An archaeological watching brief by Alex Thorne on alterations to the nave roof recorded several former roof-lines of the nave. Some structural remnants from the 14th century roof may have been located. The current roof furniture appears to date from the

post-medieval period and has been extensively repaired.

Warmington, Chapel Street (A.C.) Trial trenching by Tony Baker on a plot of land to the west of Chapel Street located a series of shallow ditches and some lengths of shallow linear slots which may have been the remnants of a timber building. The sparse finds are all medieval in date, and there was no evidence for any early-middle Saxon occupation.

Warmington, Manor House (A.C.) Further geophysical survey and trial trenching, and a large scale, open-area excavation was carried out by Ian Meadows and Michael Webster in advance of housing development on a major late Saxon/earlier medieval settlement complex at the northern end of the present village. The site comprises two or more phases of rectilinear ditched enclosures, including a complex of several timber buildings, defined by both post-pits and wall slots. The dating evidence

indicates that this site was in use for only about a century and was probably abandoned by AD1150.

Winwick (A.C.) An earthwork survey and trial excavation was carried out by Mark Holmes within the earthworks of the shrunken village ahead of a sewage works replacement scheme. Several ditches and related features indicated dense occupation of the area in the 12th-14th centuries, and a single ditch was of late Saxon date. Post-medieval activity was represented by further ditches, the infilling of a hollow way and an associated trackway. No evidence of domestic structures was recovered.

Wollaston (A.C.) Trial excavation was carried out by Anthony Maul at the Scott Bader site on the edge of the present village. Four trenches located a sparse scatter of shallow ditches, gullies and pits of medieval and post-medieval date, but no evidence of Saxon settlement.

Portable Antiquities in Northamptonshire

In 1997 the Government estimated that up to 400,000 artefacts per year were being found by members of the public and that a large percentage of these were going unrecorded. Two years on and well into the second round of pilot projects set up to record these finds on a voluntary basis, the figure has rocketed, possibly doubling the original estimate, although we have as yet no firm statistics. During the first 9 months in Northamptonshire, the scheme recorded 1086 artefacts dating from before 1800. The total number of objects seen and identified by the FLO (Finds Liaison Officer) is now in excess of 1800, and this does not include fossils/geological samples etc!

Metal detectorists have made the majority of finds seen by the FLO, and the growing success of the scheme is an excellent demonstration of the potential benefits of collaboration between detectorists and archaeologists. The artefacts so far reported represent a fantastic start for the Portable Antiquities Scheme in Northamptonshire and the surrounding counties. Much information about our national heritage, which would otherwise have been lost, has already been saved for future generations. Not all finds are made by detectorists however, a number of important finds have been unearthed while digging the garden, out walking, and even while fishing. The scheme does not only record metal finds, indeed the percentage of ceramic and flint artefacts is rising monthly with many detectorists now collecting samples of pottery or lithics. Ongoing efforts are being made to explain, where necessary, the import-

ance of gaining as much archaeological information as possible for each site, and demonstrating the value of archaeological context. To assist in this the FLO is organising ceramic handling evenings for clubs/societies and if required for interested individuals. A similar lithics handling evening and a lecture by conservator Diana Friendship-Taylor are also in the planning stage.

A new Lottery bid is about to be presented, in the hope that the scheme will in due course, be able to go 'nation-wide'. With this sort of exposure our input may well be in excess of 25,000 artefacts per year nationally. It is however imperative that the recovery of data is not seen as an end in itself. Our ultimate aim must be to provide a better understanding of our ancestors and of their activities. We must develop this previously untapped source of information in such a way as to present it as a resource for academic study as well as for promoting general public education and interest. With this in mind the FLO is actively seeking to encourage better recording practice, with finders being urged to provide at least a 6-figure grid reference. However, recalling the often strained history between many archaeologists and detectorists, we cannot expect trust to develop overnight. Given that, the scheme looks set to make a big impact on our knowledge of both the local and the national past.

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