



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY, 36 2010

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Editorial

by

ANDY CHAPMAN

THE NEW-LOOK JOURNAL

I would like to thank those members who got in touch following the issue of volume 35 at the end of 2008 for their favourable comments about the look of the new A4 format and colour printing. It also produced an immediate response in generating a few new members who joined having heard about or having seen the new style of presentation.

It was particularly gratifying to receive praise from John Williams, as former head of the Northampton Development Corporation Archaeological Unit (and my former boss):

'I have just received my copy of NA 35. May I congratulate you and the Society on the splendid appearance of the journal in its new format. When I think back to the 1970s, the Federation Bulletin and then the discussions about establishing *Northamptonshire Archaeology*, the Society has clearly come a long way and the new journal format has important lessons for many much longer-established societies. Well done to all concerned!'

Of course, after achieving the publication of volume 35, pressure of work in the summer, autumn and winter of 2009 prevented me from bringing volume 36 to publication in 2009, for which I apologise to our members. Instead, we will have another bumper issue a year late to make up for missing out last year. I hope everyone thinks it was worth waiting for.

PUBLICATION AND DISSEMINATION: PRINT v DIGITAL

Publication is always a major challenge confronting anyone undertaking archaeological research of any form. I grew up in archaeology believing in the principle that a site doesn't exist until it is published and available in the public record, and it is my belief in this approach that resulted in me taking on the job of journal editor. However, when this statement was first made the world of publication was much simpler: publication could mean nothing more than print on paper, something that you held in your hand and could place on a bookshelf.

Today we have the additional option of digital publication, where a report can be made available as a download, either for a fee or free, making it accessible world-wide to anyone who cares to track it down. You can either browse this material on your computer screen or make your own print copy of all or selected parts of any publication. In the short term this can make material far more widely available than the limited print run of this journal or of most monographs. Whether in the longer term digital publication turns out to mean transience or world-wide long-term availability is a question we will

only be able to answer in, say, 50 or 100 years time, but given the current availability and dominance of digital media it is a world that cannot be ignored, especially when it offers such potential savings in production costs.

In the NOTES section of this journal we provide further lists of client reports from commercial archaeological jobs carried out by *Northamptonshire Archaeology*, the archaeological contractor within the county council, which are available as free downloads through the website of the *Archaeology Data Service* (ADS), and we also list a few reports made available online by *Wessex Archaeology* and *Thames Valley Archaeological Services*.

In the Society we have made digital copies of our past journals up to volume 29 available through the *Council for British Archaeology* Archaeological Library (CBA ArchLib), and have also provided these directly to members on CDs attached to the past three journals: this year we include journal volumes 20-29. Journals that occupy around 0.45m of shelf space can now fit on a memory stick attached to your keyring: the only danger is misplacing the memory stick because it is so small. Used in conjunction with the Index provided on the CD last year, you should be able to track down a digital copy of any report published in the journal in a matter of minutes.

In my work with Northamptonshire Archaeology I have been responsible for publishing the major excavations of medieval sites in Raunds as two monographs, and in both we have provided the site description and interpretation as printed text and the specialist reports on attached CDs. This is guaranteed to make me unpopular with some specialists and others, who argue that this is not proper publication and is no better than the old microfiche. But it does enable the volumes to be published more cheaply, and gives the reader the choice of how they wish to make use of the specialist reports. In the long term we hope to make all of the Raunds reports available online, so that they have a digital life beyond the five-year or so lifetime in which the paper reports will be available for purchase from the publisher.

So, the modern dilemma is that while in the past dissemination meant only publication, digital publication has complicated the meaning of these terms, as digital publication can be a far more effective means of dissemination than the publication of limited numbers of paper copies often at quite high prices. This has left me both as journal editor for the Society and in my publication role with Northamptonshire Archaeology in a no-win situation. The traditionalists castigate me for failing to provide all the data as hard copy, while the modernists have asked why we are still bothering to print reports at all when they can be made available online digitally.

Personally, I will find it a sad day when the journal is



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just produced in digital form, when our members might receive just a CD with perhaps a brief printed brochure to act as a contents page and reference to the CD, but that would be the logical conclusion of the current direction, and it would be much cheaper for the society to produce. Of course, we could even just make it available on the internet for members to download, and save the cost of the CD and the postage and packing. These developments are all still at least a few years away for Northamptonshire Archaeological Society, but in the scientific world many journals are now being produced only in digital format. I gather that the scientific world has moved ahead with digital publication faster than anyone, archaeology is moving in that direction more slowly and historians are the furthest behind and the most resistant to changing their traditional approaches.

VOLUME 36

In the present volume we have tried again to provide a mix of sites and periods to cover the diverse range of archaeology taking place within the county, although we must again note the absence of any contributions from the affiliated local societies who are active in fieldwork, including the Upper Nene Archaeological Society (UNAS) with Piddington Roman villa, and the Community Landscape and Archaeology Survey Project (CLASP) with Whitehall Roman villa and their programme of associated fieldwork examining the broader Roman landscape of the area.

As a result, the journal is again dependent largely on the commercial work of *Northamptonshire Archaeology*, although in this volume we also have contributions from two other commercial organisations, *Albion Archaeology* (formerly Bedfordshire County Archaeology Service) and *Oxford Archaeology East*. While they are quite a mixed bag, there is continuity of space and time in the three reports relating to development on the western side of Northampton, at Upton, which have examined elements of an extensive landscape of prehistoric and Roman settlement to the west of Duston Roman town.

At Sywell we see the frustrating side of commercial archaeology. Within the scope of the airfield there are several known settlement sites of Iron Age and Roman date, and tantalising glimpses of these are seen at intervals of a few years when new developments take place. A few years ago, Volume 29 for 2000-01, we reported on the excavation of a small part of a small Iron Age settlement, excavated in advance of new offices. This time we have a Roman settlement seen in even less detail; with a few features glimpsed and recorded when the shallow soil stripping penetrated just deep enough to expose them, and they were then reburied without further investigation.

We also have a couple of studies from the academic world, with the re-analysis of the dating of Rainsborough hill fort within a national programme of assessing the results of archaeomagnetism, and a study of the Saxon churches of Northamptonshire and the Soke of Peterborough from Professor John Potter, who has published similar studies for several other counties as well as many contributions to national journals.

With Rothersthorpe Lift Bridge we maintain our policy of representing industrial archaeology and with the Swan Garage we arrive in the 20th-century world of the history of motoring!

Following on from the earlier comments about digital publication, this volume does see a further move in that direction. In the last volume we provided the photographic archive of the reconstructed vessels from the Stanion kilns on the attached CD. This year we have gone further. All of the client reports for commercial work will have undergone some editing to shorten them and make them more readable to a general audience before journal publication, but the client report for the excavation of the Iron Age and Roman settlement at Upton ran to over 30,000 words, with over a half of this taken up by the specialist reports. We have therefore published a much shortened version, containing only summaries of the finds reports, and have made a pdf of the client report available on the CD so that the full specialist reports are available to those who may need them.

Similarly, the heart of the article on the Swan Garage is the copy of the booklet issued at the opening of the garage and also the selection of family photographs showing the garage in its heyday. This material brings the recording of the empty shell of the building to life, but was too long to publish in the journal. We have therefore made a digital copy of the client report available on the CD so the reader can browse through and enjoy all of this extra material.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND PLANNING

For the past few years the lack of a curatorial archaeologist within the county council to carry out the basic task of scanning planning applications and issuing appropriate advice to the various district planning authorities has made Northamptonshire a national example of bad practice and a nationwide warning of the need to be vigilant in protecting these services. English Heritage and other groups have been encouraging the county council to restore the service and, finally, there has been a response. Below, Lesley-Ann Mather, the County Archaeological Advisor, describes the service in its present form.

‘The archaeology planning service has been expanded to enable provision of a full service to the Districts. The provision of a full service has been achieved by the negotiation of service level agreements (SLAs) with all the Districts, with the exception of Corby, although the service still advises on strategic applications in this area. The SLAs have enabled the County Council to recruit an Assistant Archaeological Advisor and also provides for half a post for the Historic Environment Record. The planning advice is based within the planning section of the County Council.

‘As part of the SLA, all the District’s weekly lists of planning applications are assessed for archaeological potential, pre-application advice is also provided and all fieldwork undertaken as part of the planning process within the county is fully monitored. The location of the archaeological service within the planning department facilitates integration with strategic planning in the County. The curatorial staff also provide advice to utility



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companies and respond to enquiries from the general public. The curatorial staff aim to uphold nationally defined archaeological standards and also to ensure that the information from archaeological investigations is disseminated to the general public.’

The advice is provided by the County Archaeological Advisor, Lesley-Ann Mather (01604 237909; LMather@northamptonshire.gov.uk) and Assistant Archaeological Advisor, Liz Mordue (LMordue@northamptonshire.gov.uk).

Andy Chapman
NAS journal editor
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