

Introduction to Volume 38 40th anniversary issue

by

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In 1974 the newly formed *Northamptonshire Archaeological Society* published its first full journal, labelled volume 9 as it was the successor to a sequence of eight bulletins, published between 1966 and 1973 by the Federation of Northamptonshire Archaeological Societies. The present journal, volume 38, is therefore the 30th volume in the series of full journals spanning the intervening 41 years.

I must open with an apology for the late arrival of this journal, which should have been volume 38 for 2014, our anniversary year, but has now become volume 38 for 2015; the post-anniversary volume. The only benefit arising from its lateness is that this introduction can now summarise the events that marked that anniversary. The first was the Ancient Crafts weekend held at Sywell Country Park, in late September 2014, see below, and the second was the delivery of the public lecture at the AGM, on Thursday, 6 November, by Dr John Williams. As head of the Northampton Development Corporation Archaeology Unit in the 1970s and 80s, John had been there when the society was founded in 1974, and the NDC provided many articles to the early volumes of the journal. His lecture, *Reflections on Medieval Northampton*, provided a review of the importance of Northampton in the medieval period.

Ancient Crafts Weekend, Sywell Country Park Saturday, 21 September and Sunday, 22 September 2014



Fig 1 David Waller (left), Graham Cadman and Brian Giggins try their hand at flint knapping, with James Dille, in costume, demonstrating

To mark the 40th anniversary of NAS we held an Ancient Crafts weekend at Sywell Country Park for NAS members and the public. It was disappointing that more members and others (such as MOLA Northampton staff) did not



Fig 2 Graham Cadman (left), Andy Chapman (in Iron Age costume) and David Waller making prehistoric pots

take up the opportunity to get involved in the workshop sessions. But the NAS committee enjoyed testing their skills at pottery manufacturing and flint knapping, with varying degrees of success (see the photographs below). Saturday was quiet but Sunday saw a constant stream of visitors, so the event was a success from that point of view.



Fig 3 Potter Graham Taylor, demonstrating how to make a simple pot from a ball of clay (no clay sausages here!)



Fig 4 Pat Chapman watches Paul Thompson, of Guardrobe, leather working

Thanks go to our craftspeople: potter, Graham Taylor; flint knapper, James Dilley; Roman and medieval re-enactors and craftspeople, Paul and Alex Thompson and Michael Brown, the Historic Gardener, for the making the weekend such a successful and enjoyable event.



Fig 5 Paul Thompson, now in late Roman costume, and beyond Michael Brown, the Historic Gardener, demonstrate their crafts to visitors



Fig 6 Paul Thompson leading Roman military drill

Archaeology in Northamptonshire

The past 40 years have seen many changes in the world of archaeology and this anniversary volume seemed an appropriate opportunity to look back at the history of the society and of archaeology in the county in general. It is also appropriate to look back at this time of highly significant change deriving from the present government and its austerity package, and the resultant dismantling of public services across the country.

A series of articles on the development of archaeological interest in the county, written in the 1970s by Robert Moore, then curator at Northampton Museum, and published in the museum's newsletter, have been recompiled to provide the long-term background of antiquarian interest. As the pace of development accelerated through the 1960s and early 70s, it was the pioneering work of local societies and several local individuals in launching Rescue Archaeology as a shoe-string response to the loss of archaeological sites that led the way in tackling the modern loss of archaeological sites caused by development. Robert also covers the rise of these local societies in his account.

From the 1970s onward, field archaeology in response to development threats was increasingly taken over by the Northampton Development Corporation (NDC) Archaeology Unit in Northampton (which will be examined in more detail in the next volume of the journal) and across the county from the later 1970s by the Northamptonshire Archaeological Unit (NAU) within the County Council. The NDC closed down in the mid-1980s, but for some 40 years NAU and its successors within the county council, Northamptonshire Heritage and Northamptonshire Archaeology, maintained a presence at all levels of archaeology from planning advice, maintenance of the Sites and Monuments Record (latterly rebranded as the Historic Environment Record) and carrying out fieldwork across the county.

The period of public service archaeology has now come to an end. In January 2014 the fieldwork service, Northamptonshire Archaeology, was sold off to MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology), who themselves had previously departed from the Museum of London to become an independent limited company with charitable status. The heritage side of the service has also been steadily whittled away, and with the redundancy of the long-serving HER Officer, Christine Addison, and her replacement by a post at a lower salary with a more limited remit, the service has now been reduced to a minimum level, and may eventually be outsourced along with the rest of the county council services.

These last forty years are covered by two articles. The first provides a brief history of Northamptonshire Archaeological Society, focussing on the journal itself, and the second article provides a brief obituary for Northamptonshire Archaeology, and its rebirth as MOLA Northampton.

The rest of the journal contains a mix of articles beginning in the Neolithic and Bronze Ages, and progressing through Iron Age and Roman settlement. We then have two linked articles looking at the documentary evidence for Fineshade priory and an account of trial trench

excavations at Fineshade. The final article takes us into the most modern territory we have tackled, with profusely illustrated building recording of two iconic buildings of 20th-century Northampton: the late 1930s Fishmarket and the 1970s Greyfriars bus station, now both gone. There is also an interesting notes section, details of recent publications and round-ups for work in the county in 2012 and 2013.

Finally, do not forget that there will also be a CD in the back containing supplementary material. The Barnwell report was particularly lengthy, and the editorial decision has been to place most of the finds and animal bone reporting on the CD. When this volume becomes available online, the two halves will then appear together. The two studies of Fineshade are supplemented by four client reports from Northamptonshire Archaeology (MOLA Northampton) on various other pieces of fieldwork carried out at the site. The report on the Fishmarket and Greyfriars bus station, Noerthampton, are also complemented by a copy of the original scheme design by Arup, and by the full building recording reports from Northamptonshire Archaeology (MOLA Northampton), which contain many more illustrations and photographs.

Society finances

The financial state of the society is still secure (Fig 7). Our bank balance had shown a steady increase since the early 1980s (I do not have the annual figures for 1984–88). The rate of increase has now levelled off but it should be possible to maintain funds at around £25,000–£30,000 for the foreseeable future. Most of this money is held in a Building Society account that, until the banking crises, provided a good rate of interest. As with all savings,

interest is now minimal and our primary sources of income are the annual subscriptions of our members, the subscriptions from institutional members and the charges to commercial contributors to the journal. The rising cost of postage has had a significant impact in the past few years, adding significantly to the overall cost of the journal, and member’s subscriptions alone barely cover the page cost and postage per member for a journal every two years. If we had been producing a journal annually, we would probably have had to increase both the membership fees and the charges to commercial contributors.

The record high for 2014, with a balance of £31,636.36 is misleadingly high, as the annual accounts run to the end of September, so they did not include the cost of a little over £2,000.00 for staging the Sywell Ancient Crafts weekend, and there were no costs for journal production. The figures for 2015 will stay favourable, as the costs for producing this journal will appear in the 2016 financial accounts, which will therefore show a downturn.

An unexpected boost to our finances in 2014 was receiving a little over £3,000 from the Publishers Licensing Society for copyright fees, but this was a one-off backdated payment and future payments will be much smaller. This windfall more than covered the cost of the Sywell Ancient Crafts Day.

While on the subject of finance, I could also remind our members that the society can pay grants of up to £500.00 towards individuals or affiliated local groups for archaeological research, purchase of equipment or specialist analysis. Applications detailing proposals and costs can be submitted via the Secretary and will be considered by the Committee. Ideally, we would like to see the potential to produce results that could be published, or at least summarised, in a future journal.

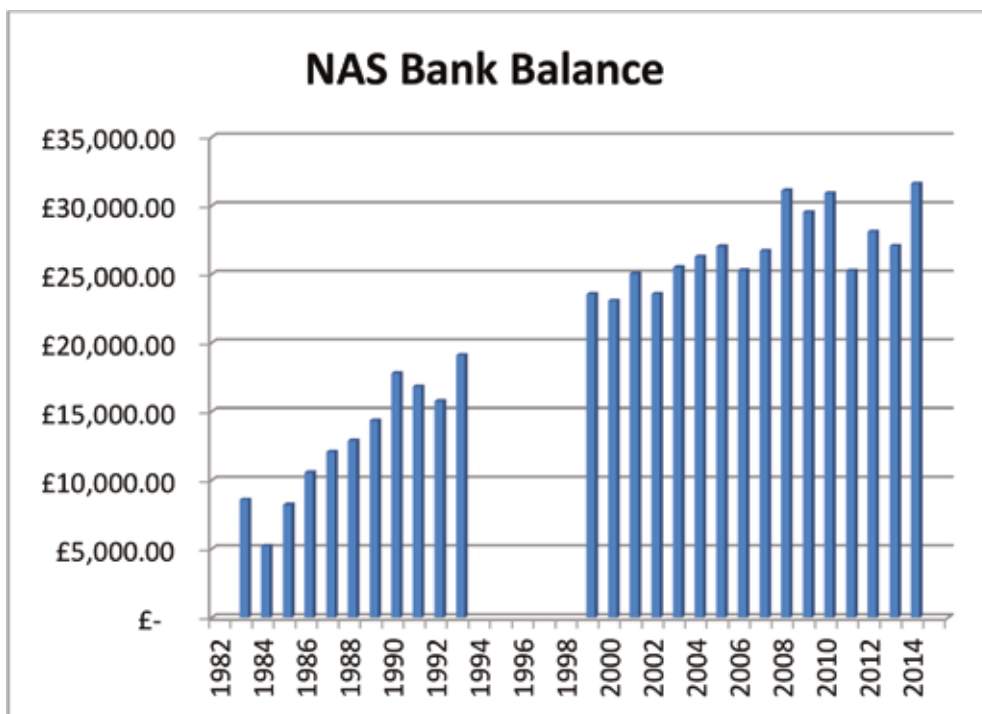


Fig 7 Northamptonshire Archaeological Society bank balance