



THE FIELDWORKER

NEWSLETTER OF THE LEICESTERSHIRE FIELDWORKERS

MARCH 2021: ISSUE 293

As we are writing this edition of the Fieldworker things appear to be improving on the COVID front. There seems like a real chance that we will get a proper summer this year and that by autumn we might be able to get back into the field properly. Meanwhile, we will keep you up to date with the ongoing situation. Check the website for updates of restrictions. The 'rule of 6' seems to be making a comeback.

Stay safe... – Peter and Mathew

IMPORTANT, PLEASE READ!

COVID SECURE GUIDANCE FOR FIELDWORK

REMEMBER: During the current national lockdown, which came into effect on 5 January, you must not leave or be outside of your home except where you have a 'reasonable excuse'. This means community archaeology work **SHOULD NOT** be carried out until the lockdown is eased.

From March 29 the 'Rule of 6' or two households will be allowed to meet outdoors. As yet we do not know if this will allow limited fieldwork or not.

To find out more about the National Lockdown please visit <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>.

When the current lockdown has ended and if/when limited outdoor activities can be resumed the following site gives details of how to carry out archaeological fieldwork in a COVID secure manner. We have also produced a risk assessment template for members/affiliated groups to download and use.

<https://leicsfieldworkers.co.uk/covid-19-guidance/>

PLEASE READ THE GUIDANCE BEFORE YOU DO ANY FIELDWORK AND MAKE SURE YOU FILL OUT A RISK ASSESSMENT!

DIARY DATES FOR 2021

All at 7.30pm on Zoom for the moment.

- May 20th: Richard Huxley and James Harvey on ULAS excavations at North Kilworth and Husbands Bosworth.
- June 17th: AGM and talk by Mike Luke on Albion Archaeology excavations in Leicestershire.
- September 16th: Jennifer Browning on recent excavations (title TBC)

THE NEXT LECTURE



The next lecture will happen on Zoom at 7.30pm on **Thursday March 18th** when **Ian Meadows** will speak on **Excavations on the Roman Town at Irchester, Northants**.

Ian will talk about the excavations which he directed at the 'small' Roman town of Irchester where over the last decade fieldwork has explored the defences, a shrine, and a large part of the suburbs, including burial grounds. The work has had a strong emphasis on volunteers and involvement of amateurs on site and several have gone on to work professionally in archaeology. Irchester was once interpreted as a summer camp for the Romans. What we now know is that it was a thriving hub tied into the larger imperial infrastructure and road network, and it may owe its origins, at least in part, to the fact this location was a good river crossing point. The excavations have recovered evidence for pottery production, leather working and metal smithing in the suburbs.

Ian spent 22 years working for Northamptonshire Archaeology and latterly MOLA Northampton as a Senior Project Officer. He now works as an archaeological consultant as well as leading excavations and teaching archaeology.

Booking Essential via Eventbrite:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/excavations-on-the-roman-town-at-irchester-northamptonshire-tickets-145123138213>

RECORDINGS OF PAST TALKS

If you missed Pete's talk in September, or Simon's in November, they are now available to watch online at <https://www.facebook.com/LeicestershireFieldworker/s/videos>. Please note, you do not need to be a member of Facebook to watch the talks.

CONTACT US

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GROUP NEWS

Oadby and Wigston Fieldworkers are still holding their monthly meeting, albeit via Zoom, with a speaker - Iain Jones gave their most recent talk on "Legal Leicester", focusing on the historical area around Grey Friars. They are also holding an extra meeting each month which is informal and simply allows members to chat, catch up and briefly to escape the boredom of lockdown. The Group are hoping to be able to resume fieldwalking in April/May - presumably with the caveat of the "Rule of Six". They are also hoping to link up with the Hallaton group to do some geophysical surveying around Laughton and Smeeton Westerby.

Hinckley Archaeological Society are working on the final stages of editing Malcolm Lockett's report on George Fox (the founder of the Quakers) with new information about his birthplace at Fenny Drayton. Malcolm is also spending some of his lockdown time making sense of past fieldwalking results, particularly the Anglo-Saxon material around Fosse Meadows. Their youngest member, Jake Clarke has recently completed his Archaeology Degree at Durham University and has just started employment on the island of Uist to head up a team to promote the wealth of archaeology as a tourist destination.

Great Bowden Heritage has got a new website where all their leaflets and articles can now be downloaded online. The website can be found at www.greatbowdenheritage.wixsite.com/site. With activities curtailed they are undertaking a Spring Footpath Survey following a similar exercise in the Autumn, all operating within the pandemic restrictions, with a view to producing a report for the local councils.

FESTIVAL OF ARCHAEOLOGY

Planning for the 2021 Festival of Archaeology is in full swing. The Festival will run for the whole month of July with the last two weeks coinciding with the national Festival. Talks will (as things stand) all be online but guided walks are being organised across the City and County. There will be no printed leaflet this year with

all information online. Details will be circulated as soon as we have them.

EXCAVATION NEWS

The wet winter and slowdown in construction has led to relatively few commercial excavations although with the Spring things appear to be speeding up.

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) have been working at the former military camp at **Scraftoft**. The camp housed troops of the US 82nd Airborne Division and was then turned into a Prisoner of War camp, mainly housing Germans. The concrete rafts of huts and some brick walling is well preserved and finds include both American and German military kit including mess tins as well as rubbish including Brylcreem jars and a roof tile painted as a chess board. Few camps like this have been examined archaeologically. There is also evidence that beneath the camp there might be Iron Age and perhaps Roman activity.



Scraftoft POW camp with Scraftoft Hall in the foreground in 1947. Image: Britainfromabove.org.uk



The chess board found at Scraftoft Camp.

At **Higham on the Hill** a long-lived medieval property boundary ditch with animal burials alongside it has been recorded. Both cows and sheep are represented. Medieval pottery and tile was recovered.

At **Ashton Green** trenching has found the continuation of prehistoric pit alignments found in earlier work to the west. Four such alignments have now been recorded running east to west making probably one of the best recorded segment of prehistoric landscape in the county. Dating suggests that they are Early Iron Age and they now run not too far from the Iron Age farm site excavated at Birstall a few years ago.

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MOLA Northampton have now completed work on recording elements of an Iron and Roman landscape north of Watling Street at the **Magna Park Extension**. This includes farmsteads and boundary features. A little bit of recording around the deserted medieval village of **Bittesby** has recorded a few medieval features, but has also shown substantial extraction pits probably associated with the railway that was cut through the site.

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Witham Archaeology have been excavating at the Roman town of **Great Casterton**. This is the only walled Roman settlement in the two counties except Leicester. A substantial stone wall, in excess of 3m wide is almost certainly the west wall of the town. Other features including a J-shaped corn drying oven have been recorded.

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Albion Archaeology have been excavating a large spread of Iron Age and Roman enclosures and boundary features at Overstone Park on the edge of **Little Bowden**.

MAGNET FISHING

Kerry Walmsley, the East Midlands Heritage Advisor to the Canal and River Trust has been in touch regarding magnet fishing within the centre of Leicester. This is the practice of using high powered magnets to recover metal objects from waterways. Too often this includes munitions such as hand grenades.

If anyone is interested in a project to properly record evidence of WWI and WWII activity in Leicester or has knowledge of where munitions might have been dumped please contact Kerry at Kerry.Walmsley@canalrivertrust.org.uk.

NEWS FROM THE HER

Helen Wells reports: HER work continues from home as it has for the past year. As well as the day-to-day work there has been some enhancement. Susan Ripper has been adding records from Conservation Area Appraisals and Neighbourhood Plans. Data for a number of new Neighbourhood Plans has been provided including archaeological sites, unlisted historic buildings and medieval ridge and furrow

earthworks. If anyone is involved in neighbourhood planning and would like data (no charge!) please do ask. We've also been working on adding information from some online resources, such as the Cinema Treasures website (<http://cinematreasures.org/>). All of the Leicestershire and Rutland cinemas on the site are now on the HER, adding to our knowledge of significant 20th century structures (significant from a social perspective if not an architectural one).



The Oadby Cinema on London Road in Oadby opened in 1937 and closed in 1981. The original Art Deco style facade has now been modified beyond recognition.

JEWRY WALL MUSEUM



Work on the Jewry Wall refurbishment is underway.

We are pleased to report that work on refurbishing the building is well underway after years of inactivity. We can now look forward to the museum re-opening at some time in the future despite some moves by councillors to abandon the project, which continues to have the active support of the City Mayor. Our friends at the Friends of Jewry Wall Museum continue to promote the site and have commissioned a new guidebook in preparation for the eventual reopening. The building is listed as a good example of 1960s architecture. The architect was Trevor Dannett, who died recently. The Friends of Jewry Wall can be contacted at jewrywallfriends@outlook.com.