



THE FIELDWORKER

NEWSLETTER OF THE LEICESTERSHIRE FIELDWORKERS

NOVEMBER 2021: ISSUE 297

COVID infections are still high. The University remain cautious about outside groups using lecture theatres so your committee has decided to continue on Zoom for at least one more meeting. We will continue to review things and decide where we go next.

– Peter and Mathew

THE NEXT LECTURE

The next lecture will happen on Zoom at 7.30pm on **Thursday December 2nd**. The speaker will be Jennifer Browning from ULAS who will be talking on **The Rutland Roman Villa Project**. This will be the first chance to hear about one of the most exciting local excavations since the discovery of Richard III. We are not able to give any details of the discoveries as information is embargoed until just before the lecture but don't miss it!!!

As usual, places need to be booked on Eventbrite.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/210571664517>

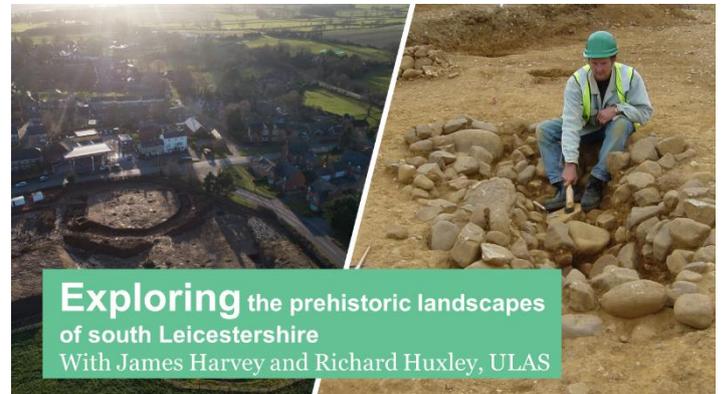
DIARY DATES FOR 2021-22

We now have a complete line up of speakers through to January 2023.

All at 7.30pm, venues TBC unless stated.

- **January 20th (2022):** Rebecca Wragg Sykes talking on Kindred: Neanderthal Life, Love, Death and Art (a joint meeting with the Prehistoric Society and LAHS). Venue: Victorian Gallery, New Walk Museum
- **March 17th:** Simon Markus of MOLA (Northants) talking on Bronze Age and Anglo-Saxon buildings and burials at Overstone, Northamptonshire.
- **May 19th:** Prof Vince Gaffney talking on The Stonehenge Hidden Landscapes Project and the Durrington Walls Pits Circle.
- **June 15th:** AGM followed by Michael Wood talking on Aethelflaed.
- **September 15th:** Kris Poole of Trent and Peak Archaeology talking on Anglo-Saxon Activity at Bottesford and Claybrooke
- **November 17th:** Mike Parker Pearson talking on the Welsh origins of Stonehenge.
- **January 20th (2023):** Dr Andrew Birley talking on Excavations at Vindolanda (title TBC)

TALK RECORDINGS



Exploring the prehistoric landscapes of south Leicestershire
With James Harvey and Richard Huxley, ULAS

Since the last newsletter we have now been able to add the missing recording of the Prehistoric Landscapes of South Leicestershire to our YouTube channel. It can be watched here: <https://youtu.be/EGiOzrDVJNA>

COMPUTER MAPPING FOR FIELDWORK RESULTS

The Group has been looking at finding a system for easily mapping fieldwork results. Our member Simon Chenery has been working with the Melton Group on the problem. On **Saturday 20th November** at 3pm he will give a talk on Zoom entitled '**QGIS: What can it do for fieldworkers?**' This will be followed by a discussion. We hope this will lead to a major step forward. The Zoom link for the meeting is below, all members welcome.

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84566587183?pwd=aTRTQ0lXUjRUS2JzZiRmQnNZWwdaQT09>

GEOPHYSICS TEAM

Our late Membership Secretary, Roger Thomas, has generously bequeathed both resistivity and magnetometry equipment to the group. We aim to set up a dedicated geophysics team to use this kit to aid groups in their research around the two counties.

An initial meeting will be held on Zoom on **Thursday December 9th at 7.30pm**. We have a list of volunteers to join this group and a link to the meeting will be emailed to everyone who has expressed an interest. If you are interested in joining the group and haven't already contacted us please email us at info@leicsfieldworkers.co.uk. We are keen to find someone to co-ordinate the group.

GROUP NEWS

The **Oadby & Wigston Fieldworkers** have remained busy, fieldwalking near Laughton, Smeeton Westerby and Theddingworth. Test-pitting has also taken place at Brocks Hill, Oadby, Laughton, and also in Keyham, where a number of residents have expressed an interest in taking part in a village test-pitting project in 2022. The group has resumed "face-to-face" meetings and have enjoyed entertaining talks from Peter Liddle on "The Glen Parva Lady" and Michael Miller on "The Athens Acropolis". Their November meeting included an introductory talk from Megan Gard, the Finds Liaison Officer, and an introduction to Keyham by Steve Bailey - who is proving to be a great advocate for the test-pitting plans in the village

The **Lutterworth Group** have continued an earlier project in Walcote and have walked a field that has yielded a good selection of flint finds, including a Neolithic polished stone axehead, a possible flint axehead, an oblique flint arrowhead, bladelets, cores and flakes. Small quantities of Roman grey ware were also found, although no evidence of occupation.



The Neolithic polished stone axehead found at Walcote.

Three trenches were excavated in Shawell which were possible pit locations. Although none of them were pits one did include a post hole of indeterminate age. A separate test pit was also excavated which contained a modern axe head, but at a metre deep shelly ware was located. A further two trenches were excavated near the Hall which produced a Jetton, mentioned in the previous newsletter, and a small amount of Roman grey ware pottery.

Two test pits were completed in Walton, near The Cross producing a range of medieval pottery.

The **Rutland Group** are very pleased to have been given permission to survey a number of fields in the Preston parish and plan to start work during the first week in November.

Melton Fieldworkers spent two enjoyable days at Garthorpe walking one large field and the second half of another large field which had been partially walked last year. The weather was perfect all weekend and the turnout was pretty good. This included several new members who came along in response to advertising on social media. In all about 20 people took part or made contact with us about the weekend. On the face of it, the fields have not yielded very much but we shall not really know until we hold our finds ID session in the near future. We learned new ways of setting out our grid and have taken the GPS data in the expectation that we will publish our results on QGIS in the near future.

Five members of **The Wreake Valley Group** joined the Melton Group recently for two days of fieldwalking at Garthorpe. This was our first outing for two years. We now have the promise of potential fields to walk but are awaiting details so are hopeful of some field walking within the Wreake Valley soon as well as a return to Hungarton. We welcome new members to our group.

MELTON FIELDWORKERS WINTER TALK SERIES

A once-a-month series of interesting and stimulating talks on archaeology held on Wednesday evenings from 7 pm at Melton Carnegie Museum.

- **November 24th:** Megan Gard, Portable Antiquities Scheme Finds Liaison Officer for Leicestershire and Rutland talking on how much has a quarter century of the Portable Antiquities Scheme changed our understanding of the archaeology and history of these counties?
- **January 26th:** Peter Liddle talking on Finding Leicestershire and Rutland's Roman Countryside.
- **February 23rd:** Steve Baker talking on Plague, Pestilence and the Black Death in Leicestershire.
- **March 23rd:** John Thomas talking on Barrows, Burials and Bronze Age at Cossington.

All welcome – Admission £5 – Doors open 7.00 pm – Talks begin 7.30 pm. Limited places available – please book early to avoid disappointment.

Tel 0116 305 3860 or meltonmuseum@leics.gov.uk to reserve seats.

MEMBERSHIP

Gemma Tallis has taken over as Membership Secretary. Roger's death has caused a hiatus in sorting out membership issues. Gemma is reorganising the system and will be in touch in due course if your membership needs renewing.

If you have a membership renewal or a query about your membership please email it to:

info@leicsfieldworkers.co.uk

A CONFERENCE ON LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND IN THE ROMAN PERIOD

The group is looking to organise a conference to pull together all the latest information on the Roman period locally with the possibility of a publication to come out of it. We are aiming at September 2022. If you are interested in contributing please contact Peter on peter.liddle51@gmail.com

EXCAVATION NEWS

Commercial fieldwork is a bit slow at present. **Wessex Archaeology** has been undertaking trial trenching in response to a Severn Trent Water Mains renewal scheme between Arnesby and Oadby. While this has been largely unproductive, previous geophysics had identified a handful of potential sites that were then avoided, or the methodology of construction has been amended to omit/minimise impact (direct drilling, etc.). But a probably later 18th century brick kiln linked to the Grand Union Canal, and at least one other previously unidentified prehistoric (BA/IA) site were discovered.

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ULAS has undertaken a watching brief during groundworks for the new visitor and educational centre at **Leicester Cathedral** which has quickly developed into an excavation due to the fact that *in situ* burials of

18th and 19th century date were uncovered. The burials lie in rows at a very shallow depth below the floor of the former Song School, which has been demolished to make way for the new building. The current work will involve the careful recording and removal of the uppermost burials so that preparatory works can recommence. A longer excavation of the basement area of the new building will be carried out by ULAS in early 2022. The Leicester Cathedral Revealed project can be followed via the following links:

<https://ulasnews.com/>

<https://leicestercathedral.org/project-updates/>

At **Church Causeway, Church Langton** a small evaluation was undertaken immediately north-east of the village during the summer. Two separate areas of activity were identified, located within the northern and south-western parts of the site. In late October / early November this became an excavation. A large enclosure and boundary ditch were recorded at the northern end of the site. Pottery recovered from the ditch is dated to the transitional late Iron Age/Roman period (AD 30-60). Of particular note was a dump of burnt material within the top of the ditch that contained a hearth bottom (from iron smithing) and an abundance of hammerscale. Activity within the south-western area consisted of further ditches, gullies, pits and postholes. A small amount of mid-late Iron Age pottery was recovered from a couple of the features.

In October and November at **Church Lane, Somerby**, ULAS has undertaken a trial trench evaluation that moved directly into an open-area excavation. A small area of 900 square metres has quite densely packed intercutting medieval ditches, and other related features. Pottery recovered so far includes early medieval Stamford ware. There are hints of earlier activity, with the presence of Roman pottery and worked lithics.

THE ARCH-I-SCAN PROJECT



The Arch-I-Scan Project is an interdisciplinary research project based at the University of Leicester, which is developing a state of the art image-

recognition and machine-learning service to identify Roman pottery remains.

Arch-I-Scan is holding two free public events in November as part of the UK's Being Human Festival. We hope that you will be able to join us as we explore 'Artificial Intelligence and Roman Pottery' through a hands-on activity which is suitable for children and adults alike. During this event, attendees will work with the Arch-I-Scan Project research team to experience how cutting-edge technology can be used to shed new light on eating and drinking in the Roman world. Participants will be supervised by project members in using their own mobile phones to record Roman pottery fragments, and will learn about how Arch-I-Scan is using artificial intelligence to identify Roman pots and sherds.

We will be running these interactive events over two days and locations. To find out more about the events and to book your place in advance, please follow the links below:

Friday 19 November, University of Leicester

<https://beinghumanfestival.org/events/artificial-intelligence-roman-pottery-19>

Saturday 20 November, Leicester Museum and Art Gallery

<https://beinghumanfestival.org/events/artificial-intelligence-roman-pottery>

If you have any questions about the activity or would like help with your booking, please feel free to get in touch with Victoria Szafara at vs210@leicester.ac.uk.

ICE AGE JOURNEYS: BRADGATE PARK

In September test-pitting was conducted by a team of volunteers working with Ice Age Journeys and Bradgate Park Trust in a quest to find further traces of Ice Age hunters on the floodplain of the River Lin. Thanks to Natural England for permission to test-pit on this Site of Special Scientific Interest and to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for grant-aiding the project.

On **Tuesday 30th November (5.30-8pm)** the results of the recent test-pitting will be presented by Lynden Cooper, and the video of the excavations will be shown for the first time. In addition, Daryl Garton will talk about working antler with flint tools.

This event is free and all are welcome. Please register your interest at iceageinsights2@gmail.com so that numbers for soft drinks can be catered for.

The event is at Newtown Linford Village Hall, 76 Main St, LE6 0AD.

HIDDEN HISTORIES OF LEICESTER



We are delighted to learn that Jim Butler's excellent YouTube series on the Hidden Histories of Leicester has been shortlisted for Public Dissemination or Presentation Award at this year's Archaeology Achievement Awards.

The Awards will be announced on December 7th.

OBITUARIES

We are very sad to report the deaths of **Jill Bourn** and **Debbie Sawday**. Jill was a long standing member of the group. She was the author of a guide to Leicestershire place names and an important work on 'Kingston' place names. She edited the Anglo-Saxons volume in 1996. She was also the editor of the Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society. She worked as a teacher and then joined the staff of the County, and subsequently City, Museum Services. She will be greatly missed, as will Debbie Sawday. Debbie was the foremost expert in medieval pottery in the County. She started as an excavator at the Austin Friars site in the City in around 1974 and worked for the Leicestershire Archaeological Unit and then ULAS as their medieval pottery specialist. She would always be willing to share her knowledge and leaves a huge gap.

CONTACT US

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Contributions welcome!

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