

New Siftings issue 7
August 2021



Welcome to issue 7

With the AGM just behind us and plans taking shape for some fieldwork we bring you issue 7.

In it you'll find

An update from Mike – and upcoming outdoor activities

A date for your diary – an evening in Walton; 26 August

Notes from our AGM

Introducing Steph Horak.....

Feedback from Bouskell Park

In memoriam... Dr Graham Morgan

You'll also find, as usual,

News from Leicestershire, Rugby and elsewhere

Contact details and links

If you'd like to share any news, activities or thoughts with the group then please send them, and ideas for future items, plus any issues with links or typos to [Hilary Calow calow888@gmail.com](mailto:calow888@gmail.com)

Our best wishes to you all, hoping you and your families have stayed safe and well and that you are enjoying summer.

An update from Mike

The AGM report is later in the newsletter, but I would like to thank Judith (Secretary), Carol (Treasurer) and Hilary (Newsletter) for all their support and effort during the pandemic period. Judith is standing down after many years as Secretary but will remain an important member of the group. Judith has made an outstanding contribution to the group, and I am sure you will join me in thanking her for all that she has done.

The position of Secretary is being taken by Steph Horak – of whom more later.

We have two test pits confirmed so far in Walton over the weekend of 21/22 August. The first is at Cruck Cottage and with people who had previously helped the Walton Community dig in 2019. They have already arranged for some friends they made during that dig to help so we may not need many volunteers. The second test pit is at the rear of Cruck Cottage so if you are available, please let Steph know.

The field has been cropped at Shawell so now we are finalising dates in September for us to dig the pits we know are there. We anticipate that we could be there for two weeks, and this should give everyone an opportunity to have a go if they so wish. Please let Steph know if you are interested.

Festival feedback



In Leicestershire the Festival ran from 3rd July to 1st August with events throughout the month. This was longer than the national event as Leicester wanted to dilute the effects on attendances of Leicester fortnight.

Mike gave a zoom presentation on 8th July entitled 'A short history of Lost Walton'. 38 people registered via Eventbrite although, in some cases, two people were (hopefully) listening.

Big thanks go to Carol who produced a **'One mile self guided, circular walk taking you around the historic buildings of Lutterworth'**. It was downloadable FOC from the Festival website. We were advised that 48 downloads were made, which was a brilliant result reflecting the substantial research that Carol had put into the walk.

Further afield Hilary ran a series of guided walks (talks in the shade on the hottest days) on the archaeology to be found at Compton Verney. Some members were able to attend and it is clearly something that Hilary will expand and build upon in the future.

26 August - LFAG and village evening at Walton Village Hall

Come and meet old friends and ... new

We'll be displaying the finds from the village test pitting we did in 2019 both for the villagers and for everyone in our group. Do join us for drinks and nibbles from 7pm. Mike will repeat his Festival presentation on Lost Walton at 7.30pm. £3 entry.

Contact Mike if you can help us set up and clear up on the day.

Notes from our AGM on 28 July

The following officers were elected

Chairman : Mike Southall

Secretary : Judith Day (Temporary appointment).

Treasurer : Carol Cambers

See the end of the newsletter for their contact details.

Subscriptions. The 2020 subs have been extended through 2021. We have to make a small charge in order to maintain eligibility for insurance cover. The proposal for 2022 for a reduction in fees to £5 for individual memberships and £6 for families at the same address was carried.

We outlined possible upcoming activity....

Talks

22nd April 2022. Presentation to the Ullesthorpe Women's Institute on 'The Romans in South West

Leicestershire’.

We will look at running a further series of talks through January / March 2022 if Covid restrictions are not in place. We have an outstanding talk by Matt Beamish on the Enderby Shield, but no date has yet been set.

Test pits. In addition to those in Walton mentioned above, we still have several test pits to complete in Lutterworth and Shawell. As soon as dates are available they will be advised.

Fieldwalking. We will look for suitable fields to walk in both Shawell and Walto /Kimcote areas to support previous activity there. This would be during the autumn and winter.

Training. Mat Morris has agreed to give the group a **training day on Finds Identification** in September – date and venue to be finalised. This could be opened up to other groups if we have spaces available.

Schools. We are hopeful that we will be able to offer some further school activities in the coming year.

Day trips It may be possible to arrange group trips to sites or digs

Further details on all these in due course.

Introducing Steph Horak, our new Secretary



Hello everyone. I am delighted to be writing my first words to the group.

I'm a local musician and allotmenteer with a keen interest in community archaeology. I have really enjoyed field-walking (if it's there we'll find it!) and more recently the community dig at Bouskell Park in Blaby. It has been a quiet year for obvious reasons, so I look forward to supporting the group in a range of activities, and to hearing from members about where and how they would like to see the group steered.

We will be sending out a questionnaire in the coming weeks and are keen to hear about your interests, availability, and expectations. I think it could be good to enrich our activities with some experimental archaeology (such as pottery, flint-knapping, cookery, textile-making etc) in the downtime of seasonal field-walking, but of course you could tell me otherwise on the questionnaire! Other than that, we need to continue to contact farmers for field-walking opportunities, and community members for test-pit digging, I am happy to follow up on any contacts you might have.

You can contact me at any time about the group at my email address stephorak@gmail.com. I look forward to meeting you all in person and thank you for having me!

Bouskell Park Community Dig Blaby June/July 2021

Members of our group joined the test pitting organised by ULAS as a community archaeology project involving more than 100 volunteers to dig 10-14 test pits over 6 days. The aim To find out why the ground is so uneven....

Well actually, the aim was to make new discoveries about the past history of Bouskell Park, engage the residents of the area in that, inspire an interest in the park and provide an opportunity for some hands-on archaeology.

For a short introduction, watch Mat Morris

<https://www.facebook.com/147540875295063/videos/2958579057802888>

And his 40 minute digital briefing on what, why and how

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SRwFRWBLk1g>

Watch Gemma Tallis

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=3904621802998615>

And best of all, watch the Leicester Mercury report.....

<https://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/news/local-news/prehistoric-worked-flint-medieval-pottery-5597862>

(See if you can spot anyone on the videos above)

We asked for feedback from LFAG members who joined in ...

From Ralph Coleman

I was fortunate to be part of the team digging on the first two days at Bouskell Park. We were allocated a fairly flat area and I worked with four others in the team, none of whom had done anything like this before. Over the course of the first day we got down to the bottom of level three, finding some pieces of medieval pottery and bits of clay pipe. On the second day through levels four and five we found very little, except the odd pieces of medieval pottery. As

we started to uncover level six it became very stony and we were told it could be a gravel or cobbled surface, at which point we were instructed to finish recording, close the pit and back fill.

It was a very enjoyable experience to be out digging again after the enforced break, and to work with some lovely people, three of whom expressed a real interest to become involved in future projects.

[photo courtesy Leicester Mercury / Chris Gordon.]



From Jim Newmark

I arrived promptly along with many others at the park in a cloudburst of rain - but weather apps all agreed that this would clear, and Matthew Morris and his team were confident. His Indiana Jones lookalike appearance was helpful, as well as their informality and organisational skills being

reassuring. I had at least done this before (in my back garden), and many there hadn't - memories came flooding back and in the privacy of my own mind I was an expert. Matthew gave the history and rationale of the dig and we were suitably enthused.

I was allocated with four others to Pit 1 (of six that day), on a prominent linear mound. Matthew came round and indicated his hope of a feature beneath - we were truly at the cutting edge of the archaeological world. All strangers to each other at first, with varying amounts of experience, we bonded quickly. The skills came flooding back, and never has turf been removed so expertly. I had done my bit - the rest was up to my team.

To cut a long story short, the excitement of the turf removal turned out to be the highlight of that particular pit. The next few hours was unremitting hard work and by the end of the day we had managed to dig 20cm. I am not a gardener and my musculature in that direction has atrophied, and even if I was, I don't think that solid clay mixed with random stones sends joy to any heart. However, as one of the only two males on our team, we took turns. The only tool that made any difference was the mattock with a full swing and hitting stones with that rather than clay was a frequent occurrence and not much fun. We were far behind the other pits and knew it. Rumours of finds in other pits came across. We could see Matthew and his team peering into the others with great interest - he seemed noticeable by his absence from ours. Those not digging set up a protest march around the pit "*We want medieval pottery, and we want it NOW*". This attracted the peripatetic camera man who came across and we sent him as an emissary - Matthew came across, gave a quick glance, and took pity on us. Another 10cm in a quarter pit and he would decide what to do. Our new friend the camera man told us that we were now generally known as the troublemakers. The quarter pit dug to 30cm revealed nothing but more clay and random stones and we were (very, very) glad that Matthew agreed that enough was enough. The pit was backfilled.

Two conclusions

- 1) From Matthew - the linear mound was probably originally a hedge boundary
- 2) From me (I can't speak for the others and it is not the sort of thing to discuss with people you really don't know well) - archaeology is boring and hard work.



Thus ended the first day

We were given another pit to dig on the second day (Pit 7). Refreshed by a night's sleep and the knowledge that other pits had revealed finds, I was ready to revise my previous day's conclusion. The turf removal was done in record time, the ground was soft and easy to dig, and we were down to 20cm in about a quarter of the time of the previous day. What was this, pottery! Suddenly we had the attention we craved - Matthew and the team appeared like magic. Medieval, possible 12th century! A large piece, best so far. We were the best archaeologists there. Where were the crowds? Recording, and onwards we dug. A large stone appeared in one corner at the bottom of the 30cm level - but somehow this was different. It was out of place, we hadn't found any stones before, what was it doing

there? But we had to stop to record, that was the strict rule. Then we started the next layer, more stones, but these were not random. These were very different from yesterday. The soil was easy to dig, not much clay, we hadn't used the mattock all day, just trowels etc to break it up and then cleaned away with a small shovel or scooped hands.

And it slowly appeared, stone by stone. Matthew came round. "Clearly a surface" he said. "Yes!!!"

The image does not do it justice - it is clearly manmade and extended well beyond the pit itself. And it was genuinely exciting - seems strange, doesn't it, hardly something to be excited about? An old road or something?

But we had found it, the first time it had been revealed for centuries. We cleaned it up, stood around it, explained it to all the passers-by, whether they wanted to know or not. Wandered away to look at the other finds (none as exciting as ours), and then back to make sure it had not gone away.

Two conclusions

- 1) From Matthew - this is a medieval surface
- 2) From me (and the others) - archaeology is exciting.

From Honor Rawlings

"I was on the first 2 days so more has been found by the finish. There were some early and late medieval finds. Some of them were rubbed so it's likely they were in a field, but some were crisp meaning they were dropped where they were found. "

Quote of the day "Mmmm.. that's something....." Honor, tasting pottery 😊

(please don't try this at home)

In memoriam – Dr Graham Morgan

Dr Graham Morgan, archaeological conservator, and chairman of Rugby Archaeological Society, sadly passed away in June. He had been ill for some time following a stroke in 2019. Graham lived in Walton and followed the test pitting we did there with interest and enthusiasm, albeit from his chair. He will be missed, and our thoughts are with his family.

News from the [Leicestershire Fieldworkers](https://leicsfieldworkers.co.uk/)

<https://leicsfieldworkers.co.uk/>

Upcoming talks (on zoom):

- **September 16th, 7.30pm:** Mathew Morris from ULAS on the lost churches of Leicester's north-east quarter
- **November 18th, 7.30pm:** Jennifer Browning from ULAS on recent ULAS excavations
- **January 20th, 7.30pm:** Rebecca Wragg Sykes on Kindred: Neanderthal Life, Love, Death and Art (in association with the Prehistoric Society). If you haven't read her book, it's fantastic!

News from Rugby

[Rugby Archaeology Society](http://www.rugbyarchaeology.org.uk/)

<http://www.rugbyarchaeology.org.uk/>

Rugby's talks (second Saturday of the month) will begin again in October. We don't know yet if they will be F2F in the museum or on zoom, or indeed a mixture of the two. More news in due course.

In the meantime, the museum is open, so do go and see the small display of finds from Shawell on exhibition in Rugby. The display runs until November 2021.



News from elsewhere

Stonehenge tunnel has been kicked into the long grass ... again!

And from the BBC, a wonderful stream of archaeology news.....

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/topics/c1038wnxyy0t/archaeology>

Contact names and details

Chairman: [Mike Southall](#)



Contact Mike with ideas for future activities, what you'd like the group to do (or not do) and if you want to help with farmer liaison.

michael.southall@mypostoffice.co.uk

Secretary: [Steph Horak](#)



Contact Steph on data protection, health and safety and our circulation list.

stephorak@gmail.com

Treasurer: [Carol Cambers](#)



Contact Carol about subscriptions and our work with schools.

carolcam47@btinternet.com

Subscriptions for 2020 have been rolled over to 2021 so if you haven't yet paid for 2020 please do and avail of this great offer!

New Siftings feedback and input: [Hilary Calow](#) calow888@gmail.com