



THE FIELDWORKER

NEWSLETTER OF THE LEICESTERSHIRE FIELDWORKERS

JANUARY 2023: ISSUE 304

Happy New Year everyone and enjoy your latest edition of The Fieldworker.

– Peter and Mathew

THE NEXT LECTURE



Our next speaker at 7.30pm on **Thursday January 19th 2023** will be Dr Andrew Birley. His talk is **Vindolanda, a settlement, peoples, and frontier in transition.**

Roman Vindolanda is now one of the most famous archaeological sites in the UK. Known for its incredible preservation, landscape and the wealth of everyday artefacts that have survived which add colour to an otherwise grainy image of Roman Britain's legacy. This lecture looks at some of the recent discoveries and excavations which help to paint a vivid picture of how life changed at the site through nine centuries of occupation. It also considers how the increasing threat of an erratic climate is damaging the sensitive environment in which so much has remained hidden but also preserved for so long.

Andrew Birley is the Director of Excavations at Vindolanda and CEO of the Vindolanda Trust. He is a graduate of the University of Leicester where he also completed his doctorate.

Many of us will have visited Vindolanda (and some, I know, have joined the excavations). We are keen to support the work of the Vindolanda Trust and there will be an opportunity for attendees to donate towards their work.

The meeting will be in person in the Rattray Lecture Theatre at the University of Leicester. There will be parking on campus as at previous lectures.

Book a place at the lecture via Eventbrite at <https://vindolanda.eventbrite.co.uk>

DIARY DATES FOR 2023

All at 7.30pm, venues TBC unless stated.

- **March 16th 2023:** Dr Will Bowden talking on The Caistor Roman Town Project
- **May 18th 2023:** Dr Chris King talking on The City of Caves Project
- **June 15th 2023:** AGM and Jennifer Browning talking on the Rutland Roman Villa Part 2
- **September 21st 2023:** Mathew Morris talking on Leicester Cathedral Revealed Part 2
- **November 16th 2023:** Prof Jane Hawkes talking on Setting the Church in Stone

GROUP NEWS

The Oadby & Wigston Fieldworkers report that 2022 was a very busy year. Apart from the regular meetings, 21 fields were walked by 38 different members of the group around Laughton, Gumley and Gilmorton, and a potential new Romano-British site was found near Mowsley. Also 27 different members were involved in digging 12 test-pits near Laughton, Mowsley, Gumley and Keyham. Further test-pits are planned for all these locations for 2023, and new fields are waiting to be walked near Saddington.

Lutterworth Fieldworkers will be having a meeting on 18th February at the Methodist Church, Lutterworth, at 10.30am when **Mathew Morris** will be giving a talk on **Leicester Cathedral Revealed: The story so far**

Melton Fieldworkers will be holding a finds session on January 21st at 10am at Melton Carnegie Museum when finds from recent fieldwork at Garthorpe will be identified.

In November the **Rutland group** were at long last able to return to and complete a field in Ridlington which they had to leave in March 2020 when Covid restrictions first came in. That probably is the last available field in the parish.

The Croxton Kerrial Heritage Trust have arranged for a permanent loan of the finds from the Medieval Manor House site with the landowners, the Belvoir Estate. The Anglo Saxon and medieval finds together with other Neolithic and Iron Age finds are now on display in St Botolph's Church in the village, adjacent to the Medieval Manor House site.



The new display of finds in St Botolph's Church, Croxton Kerrial.

GEOPHYSICS TEAM REPORT

The geophysics team carried out two more resistivity surveys at Grace Dieu in November. Due to the weather and team members availability over the holidays there was no activity during December. The team plans to complete surveying at Grace Dieu during January and February.

EXCAVATION NEWS

ULAS have two major excavations under way. At **Leicester Cathedral** the long running excavation is starting to come to an end. Most of the burials – now over 1000 - have been lifted and substantial Roman walls have been found in the corner of the excavation. These relate to what appears to be a sunken featured building. The floors have yet to be reached. In what appears to be a pit for robbing the building were burials, some crouched and one prone. These were sealed by a layer containing only Saxo-Norman Stamford ware. This suggests that these may well be Late Saxon, but it will probably fall to radiocarbon dating to work out how early these might be. Keep up to date with all the latest news from the project at <https://ulasnews.com/leicester-cathedral-revealed/>

At **Rothley** work in advance of a large housing development is also continuing, although held up by the inclement weather and Christmas. A further report next time.

At **Lutterworth** the early stage of an excavation has already revealed Iron age ditches and lots of pits, hopefully some will be earlier (Neolithic pits were found during the trial trenching phase).



Then and now: the Leicester Cathedral excavation in June 2022 and January 2023.



The newly discovered Roman wall, part of a sunken-floored Roman building extending beneath the Cathedral.

Allen Archaeology have completed the main excavation at **Uppingham** where they have recorded a double ditched boundary/trackway and around 20 Anglo-Saxon cremation burials. This is only the third Anglo-Saxon cemetery locally producing only cremation burials, the others being at Thurmaston and

Glaston. A kiln within a ring ditch has produced some scored ware pottery.

DIGGING FOR BRITAIN

The new series (series 10) of Digging for Britain is now airing on BBC2. All the episodes can be found on BBC iPlayer now. Episode 3 features Matt Beamish talking about the Enderby Iron Age shield and Episode 5 has an update on the Rutland Roman Villa.

CURRENT ARCHAEOLOGY AWARDS



ULAS has been nominated for Current Archaeology's Research Project of the Year 2023 award for their work on Leicester's archaeology. The award celebrates the research projects that made the pages of the magazine over the past 12 months. The nomination is based on two articles, one by Nick Cooper and Mathew Morris which promoted the Highcross monograph and another that Mathew wrote about Leicester's links with Roman Africa. You can read the articles online here:

<https://the-past.com/feature/reinventing-ratae-exploring-roman-and-medieval-leicester/>

<https://the-past.com/feature/leicester-and-roman-africa-exploring-ancient-multiculturalism-in-the-midlands/>

The award is decided entirely by the public so please vote. To vote go to <https://archaeology.co.uk/vote>

Voting closes on February 1 and the results will be announced at the end of February.

LEICESTERSHIRE MUSEUMS ACQUIRE EARLY MEDIEVAL PENDANT

A 1,400-year-old gold pendant was recently acquired by Leicestershire County Council Museums a year after being discovered by a local metal detectorist. The gold bulla pendant is now displayed alongside other pendants and beads from the Anglo-Saxon period at Melton Carnegie Museum in Melton Mowbray (<https://www.meltonmuseum.org/>).



Image: Phil Harding

The find was reported under the Treasure Act to the Portable Antiquities Scheme and recorded by the finder, Phil Harding (see <https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/1044459> for the finds record).

Pendants of this type became popular in England during the 7th century and would have been worn on a necklace with other beads and pendants. The Desborough Necklace in The British Museum is the most famous example, along with another spectacular find reported from Harpole in Northamptonshire, which was in the national news in December 2022 (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-northamptonshire-63860132>).

TIM SCHADLA-HALL

We are sad to report the death of our member, Tim Schadla-Hall. He died in hospital in Leicester of a heart attack but had been battling cancer for several years. Tim was a distinguished archaeologist whose major excavation was in the Vale of Pickering on a nationally important Mesolithic site. He came to Leicester from Hull as Deputy Director of the Leicestershire Museum Arts and Record Service, becoming Director to succeed Patrick Boylan. After failing to stop the Service breaking up during the Local Government Reorganisation in 1997, he became Reader in Public Archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology. He continued to take an interest in Leicestershire archaeology and will be remembered by many for his teaching on the Certificate of Archaeology course at Vaughan College.

CONTACT US

THE FIELDWORKER is edited by Peter Liddle, 57 STANFELL ROAD, LEICESTER, LE2 3GE.

Tel: 0116 2214508

Email: peter.liddle51@gmail.com.

Contributions welcome!

Our webmaster is Mathew Morris who also welcomes details of events and news.

Email: mlm9@le.ac.uk