



THE FIELDWORKER

NEWSLETTER OF THE LEICESTERSHIRE FIELDWORKERS

MARCH 2023: ISSUE 305

THE NEXT LECTURE



Our next speaker, at 7.30pm on Thursday March 16th 2023, will be Will Bowden of the University of Nottingham who will be speaking on “**What the Iceni did next – new evidence from Caistor Roman town**”.

Book a place at the lecture via Eventbrite at <https://What-the-Iceni-did-next.eventbrite.co.uk>

This talk will describe recent results from the long-running excavations at Caistor St. Edmund (ancient *Venta Icenorum*) in Norfolk, carried out by Caistor Roman Project and the University of Nottingham.

In particular, it will focus on the evidence from the recent excavations of the town's huge extra-mural temple complex, which suggest that the idea that the Iceni were impoverished after the Boudican revolt needs to be reassessed.

Will Bowden is Professor of Roman Archaeology and Head of the Department of Classics and Archaeology at the University of Nottingham. He has taught at the University of Nottingham since 2006 and has carried out fieldwork in Italy, Jordan, Albania and the UK.

The Caistor Roman Project is a community archaeology group that was established as a charity in 2009 and carries out research in its own right. Will has an active role as Research Director and Trustee. For further information on the project see <http://caistorromanproject.org/>.

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

DIARY DATES FOR 2023

All at 7.30pm, venues TBC unless stated.

- **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

LAHS HISTORY FAIR



Our friends at the Archaeological and Historical Society are hosting the History Fair on March 18th at Beaumanor Hall, Woodhouse, LE12 8TX.

This is a fantastic free family event with expert talks, hands-on activities, re-enactments and dozens of local history and heritage stalls.

For The full programme go to

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100085175029808>

GEOPHYSICS TEAM REPORT

During January and February, the geophysics team surveyed a record number of resistivity and magnetometry grids, despite the cold weather. Over the two-month period nine team members participated in surveys at Grace Dieu (5 days resistivity in January) and Frisby (4 days magnetometry in February). Most of Grace Dieu has now been surveyed by both magnetometry and resistivity. Over 5 days in January

the team carried out resistivity surveys covering over 0.72ha within and around the priory ruins. We plan to complete the small remaining area in the spring when the ground conditions improve.



Surveying at Grace Dieu on a cold, frosty day.

The magnetometry survey of the main field in Frisby is now complete. The team spent 4 days during February to complete the remaining 76 grids (3.4ha) and now have completed 146 grids totalling 5.8ha. This has revealed an intriguing Iron Age site (see the last Fieldworker). On our last survey day, Neil Bevan found a spectacular near perfect Bronze Age barbed and tanged arrowhead.



The flint arrowhead found by Neil at Frisby.

The whole team is looking forward to more surveying as new sites become available.

If you would like to join the team, please contact Carolyn Chenery at cac.geophys@gmail.com.

GROUP NEWS

The **Oadby & Wigston Fieldworkers** have started the year with two excellent meetings - Peter Liddle on the Rutland Roman villa and Bill Davice on poverty and the poor people of Oadby. Coming up is Iain Jones on the

English Civil War. Two fields have been walked near Kilby Bridge, with more planned, and a test pit is scheduled in Oadby for March.

Lutterworth Fieldworkers have finished walking fields at Walcote over January and February. They have also held a Roman day at Sherrier Junior School and Mat Morris gave a talk on Leicester Cathedral Revealed in February.

EXCAVATION NEWS

ULAS's two major excavations are both almost complete. At **Leicester Cathedral** the long running excavation has finally come to an end. Over 1100 burials were recorded and lifted. A substantial Roman structure has also been recorded. It was a stone cellar with a concrete floor and painted walls. An entrance was found in the south west corner marked by large slate flagstones. The most intriguing find was the base of a small stone altar. This may suggest that the cellar was used as a shrine or cult room. The discovery has had a bit of a media whirlwind this week, read more about it here <https://ulasnews.com/2023/03/07/a-roman-shrine-beneath-the-cathedral/>.



Excavation of the Roman cellar at Leicester Cathedral.



The Roman altar stone found at Leicester Cathedral.

The last twist in the project was a mass burial sealed by a clay capping. Other mass burials in Leicester have all turned out to be 11th century but there is good evidence, in the form of associated pottery sherds, that these are later and may be the first physical evidence of the Black Death in the City.



Excavating the mass burial at Leicester Cathedral.

At **Rothley** a large excavation of a multi-phase prehistoric site is also completed. It has been running since July 2022 following up fieldwalking and geophysical survey, which had identified two adjacent enclosures. The earliest features were pits containing flint, which are likely to date to the Early Bronze Age. There were several phases of enclosure. An early irregular enclosure was replaced by more rectangular enclosures. Many round houses were revealed in the form of ring gullies and post rings. Most were inside the enclosures but several were outside and may hint at a phase of open settlement. Several large water holes were also excavated. At least one phase is dated by Middle – Late Iron Age Scored Ware pottery.



Excavation of one of the ring gullies at Rothley.

At **Great Casterton** a small excavation on the street frontage has revealed evidence of a substantial Roman building and a medieval (?) oven or malt kiln.

At **Beaumont Leys** a small excavation has produced evidence of two Iron Age round houses next to a

boundary ditch as well as pits and post holes producing pottery, bone and burnt daub.

Archaeological Research Services (ARS) have begun the mitigation works on the Melton Mowbray Distributor Road, a total of 12 areas are to be targeted, from its junction with the Nottingham Road (A606), across the Waltham Road (A607), to a proposed roundabout on the Oakham Road, north of Burton Lazars. The initial phase of work has ARS stripping two areas west of Scaford Lane and north of the Melton Country Park. The project will include geoarchaeological modelling as well as conventional excavation of a range of archaeological sites, mostly of later prehistoric and Roman date. A particularly complex area of archaeological remains south of the River Eye will be targeted in advance of the construction of the planned works compound and storage area required to enable the construction of the bridge and carriageway crossing of the river valley.

FESTIVAL OF ARCHAEOLOGY



This year, the Leicestershire and Rutland Festival of Archaeology will be held between Saturday 1st and Sunday 30th July (the national CBA festival runs from 15th-30th July). Already we have a substantial number of talks, guided walks and other events in the programme. We are always keen for new ideas and offers of help in running events and with publicity. Contact Peter on peter.liddle51@gmail.com.

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: mim9@le.ac.uk