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Test pitting continues

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Caistor Clarion

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Wymer Field - report by Mike

First, the name. There is nothing in the annals of the village to call the field Wymer Field; we've named it because Janie Wymer owns it and seemed very pleased when we told her!

The field borders Old Hall at the north east and was geophysed by Dave Bescoby and our team last year - which informed our placing of test pits. The much talked of triple ditch runs across the south eastern corner of the field. The field is used for horse grazing at present but the 1838 tithe map shows it as divided into strips for gardening and small holdings. A visitor to our dig remembered it being sown with potatoes in the not too distant past.

It was five years ago that Dave B quipped that you should never dig on the basis of geophysics - and so it was. We dug four pits last year and a further five this year. As seems usual with the work we do in the area, we were rich in finds but poor in structures.

Originally I thought that there was a good chance that we might find an industrial area just outside of the ditch where the kind of people lived who wouldn't be wanted in a nice town but whose products the inhabitants would be eager to purchase. I'd thought that we would be into a land of post holes and temporary dwellings rather than flint walls. We found neither.

What we did find was pottery, metalwork and coinage that appears to date from Roman, through Saxon and on to medieval times, and coming to an end with Victorian white ware. If there had been any small scale occupation, I think that farming over the centuries had

obliterated it and the pottery was all abraded - a posh word for knocked about by the plough. We only have an enigmatic structure of clay or flint found last year - some kind of oven or kiln perhaps - which has yet to be dated. A beaten chalk floor and a rough cobbled area that we discovered would appear to be part of the cottage complex which existed on the Stoke Road edge of the field. It was there in 1838 but had disappeared by 1882. Some of our members are doing more research into the cottages and we hope to be clearer on that in due course.

At the start of our seven days on the field, the weather was cold, windy and miserable. By the last day we were in shirt sleeves. Whatever is or isn't found, it's always a pleasure to work with our team; members are endlessly optimistic and we are all learning together which is good to see. And they all get on together - heard from the sieving team 'if you say you've found a Roman coin again I'll slap you'. I can't stress strongly enough what a pleasure it is to see people grow in confidence - the enthusiasm was there already - and to watch our youngest recruit grow over the period from a complete newbie to someone who had a real grip on the techniques of digging and the processes we go through.

My sincere thanks to everyone who took part for their support and involvement. Thanks too for the support from the Caistor Hall Hotel for their 'Snug' where we could find refuge from the wind while eating excellent packed lunches prepared by them. Here we are at the hotel with manager Kormal and staffer Jenna.



Our thanks and gratitude particularly to Janie Wymer and Bill Gould for allowing access to the field.

And finally, thanks to the people of the village who visited us regularly and kept us going with their interest and enthusiasm.

Next....

A quick word about the future - Mr & Mrs Jarrold have invited us back to work at Old Hall in the last week of August. More later - but put it in your diary!

Have you booked for Flag Fen?

There are still places available on the Flag Fen trip on Wednesday **13 May**, so don't delay, send your booking form and cheque to Vicky to reserve your place by **20 April**. Full details are available on the booking form which you can find at this link - www.caistorromanproject.org/forms/Flag_Fen_May_2015.pdf

Just to remind you of what was said last time:

Flag Fen comprises over 20 acres of park. Visitors can view a preserved section of the ritual causeway and a museum housing a selection of the artefacts discovered during excavations. Alongside weapons, tools and jewellery, there is the oldest example of a wooden wheel found in England and even a pair of perfectly-preserved bronze shears, complete with their wooden box. The outdoor areas recreate a prehistoric landscape, complete with reconstructed roundhouses from the Bronze Age and Iron Age.

Also included is a guided tour of the Must Farm boats. These eight prehistoric log boats are undergoing conservation by a team of world-class experts.

More information at <http://www.vivacity-peterborough.com/museums-and-heritage/flag-fen/>

Cost: £17.50 members and £22.50 for non-members covering both entry and transport

If you are interested in joining this trip please contact Vicky at vixter437@tiscali.co.uk so we can gauge numbers.

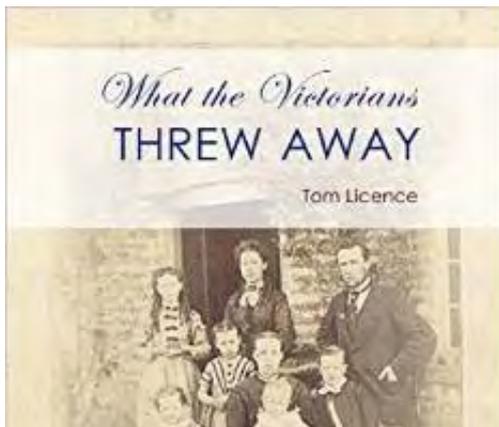
2015 Connected Communities Festival

Will has recently won some funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council to run an event as part of the 2015 Connected Communities Festival. The event, which will take place on 21 June, will allow us to experiment with some exciting new technology that will allow anyone (really absolutely anyone) to create site tours (or any other sort of tour) accessible through tablets and mobile phones. We'll experiment with creating a tour of the Roman town and perhaps the village too. And we'll have lunch!

Will would also like to point out that English Heritage has made a wide range of their archaeological monographs available as PDFs for free download. The link is:

http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/eh_monographs_2014/

Talk dirty to me





What does Victorian rubbish teach us?.....a talk on Tuesday 5 May, 19.30 at the Caistor Hall Hotel

Dr Tom Licence, Director of the Centre of East Anglian Studies at the UEA, has kindly agreed to give Caistor Roman Project and friends a talk on the community project 'What East Anglia threw away' - investigating the region through its rubbish. His book 'What the Victorians Threw Away' is hot off the press and will be on sale on the evening. Tea, coffee and drinks will be available from the bar.

Members and anyone whose garden has been surveyed for digging: free
Non-members: £5.00 paid on the night

Email now to reserve a seat as places are limited. Contact Vicky: vixter437@tiscali.co.uk by 25 April.

If you would like to pre-order a meal contact the hotel direct on 01508 494998.

We are grateful to Giles for pointing out the book. In Giles' words:

It should be of interest to many members and the database may well be helpful to the group when researching 19th to 20th century bits and pieces from the test pit assemblages.

Dr Licence has provided this:

The book ('What the Victorians Threw Away' ISBN 978-1782978756) uses rubbish dumps as archives on everyday life, but it also offers a lot of help in identifying and dating the sorts of things discarded in the period 1870-1920, particularly glassware and ceramics. More datable items can be viewed on the database on the website: www.whatthevictorianssthrewaway.com.

Simply enter the database and browse, or click on the magnifying glass to search, and type in a search term such as clay pipe, plate, ginger beer, etc. It is still a work in progress, so more items and posts will be added in due course.

Though archaeologists working on post-industrial sites often come across such middens, they are seldom exploited to their full potential because of a lack of academic literature. The book makes a start on this, while introducing the topic to a popular audience by telling stories with the objects.

A note from Chairman Alan

We continue to make progress in developing CRP as a local community archaeology project. A programme of events and fundraising will take place over the coming months - details elsewhere in this edition of Clarion - and the support of members, volunteers and the public is vital.

Fundraising is especially important this summer, as we have been awarded a grant of £5000 from the Foyle Foundation, subject to us raising the same amount elsewhere, on a pound-for-pound basis. We have raised close to £3000 so need another £2000 to achieve the full grant. The trustees are pursuing a number of applications to local grant giving foundations, as well as planning local fundraising events. These funds will enable us to continue the programme of digs and research over the next year.

We need the support of members - if you enjoy local archaeology, whether or not you are able to dig or undertake fieldwork, please join CRP as a member - £20 gives a year's membership plus participation in our research work (if you wish), discounts on workshops etc - and with our AGM coming up, an opportunity to influence what we do and how. And what you pay is effectively doubled by the Foyle grant.

2015 blog

Ian Jackson reports that he has set up this year's blog and added posts for the digging over Easter. The site is at www.caistorromanproject2015.wordpress.com

In the press

We hope to have an article in the EDP on Thursday or Friday this week following the visit by Tara Greaves on Easter Saturday arranged by Val.

And last a caption competition...



Taken in Terry Humprey's garden yesterday: just what is Martin's leg up there for?

Dates for your diary

5 May, 19.30 What the Victorians threw away, Caistor Hall Hotel

13 May, Flag Fen trip

16 May, NAHRG annual conference on Anglo-Saxon East Anglia
(enquiries@nahrg.org.uk)

18 May, 19.00 CRP AGM and project briefing, open to all members - Caistor Hall Hotel

12-14 June, Roman pottery conference (alice.lyons1@ntlworld.com)

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