

WAS NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WELWYN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY AUTUMN 2005



The more observant readers of this little journal recording the affairs of the Welwyn Archaeological Society will have noticed a small change in the appearance of the last, Summer, issue. In place of the familiar separate pages we had the folded and stapled format.

This issue introduces another, and possibly historic, change with the Newsletter now edited by me, Bryan Scott, instead of Tony. This is one of several changes within WAS to allow Tony to step back and concentrate on the **WAS** back catalogue of Site Reports and cataloguing some 30 years of excavations of the finds from Chapel Wood to Hawbush. A span of some thirty years to catch up upon, not a task for the faint hearted or those with a poor memory base.

The object of the Newsletter remains, of course exactly the same as before, to keep members informed about the Society's activities both in the field and in the broader social arena. It is hoped that I can encourage more contributions. Partly because of the limits on my talents as a writer and the desire to have a broader scope of input, views, opinions and experiences to share with other members

Another change to the comfortable world of **WAS** is the retirement of Brian Bolton-Knight as Treasurer and Cliff Hassall *volunteering* to the position of caring for the funds and cash flow of the Society. The first task will be to collect the next round of subscriptions. To this end, and make his life easier at the start of the new Lecture season, shorten and speed up the process a slip is included with the Newsletter. Fill it in, bring it, completed, to the meeting with Cheques or cash and be impressed by the efficiency as **WAS** tentatively moves towards the latter part of the twentieth century!! Sorry, we do not do plastic

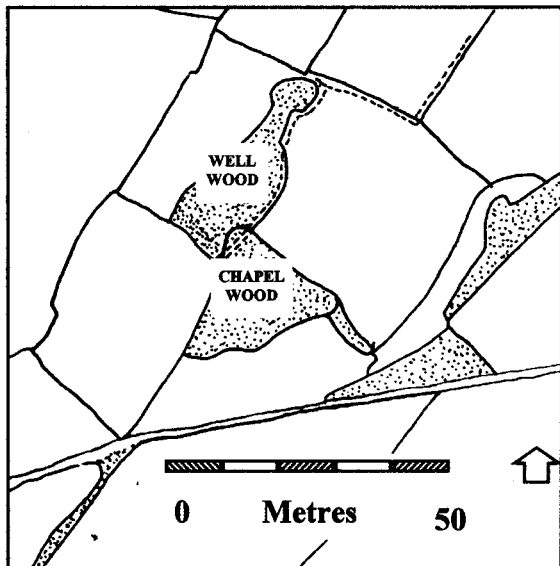
The **October Outing** advertised in the programme for Saturday October 15th to Warwickshire, which is being investigated as usual by Tony and Merle in person as I write, is to Warwick Castle and The Lunt Roman Fort. Follow in the footsteps of the Roman Army it says on the enclosed leaflet, the base for the Roman Military Research Society, XIII Gemina. Close inspection of the photograph shows a shield decoration familiar to the more observant visitors to our Roman Days although whether Mike Heasman is actual one of the squad in the picture I cannot say.

Both sites include a guided tour as part of the costs and, regrettably, this facility seems to form an increased element of the budget. Leaflets extolling the attractions of both locations are enclosed with this newsletter, together with a booking form for the whole outing. Booking early helps us with the arrangements and the costs are based on our anticipated numbers of 30 seats on a 45 seat coach to break even.

Comments on venues, cost and the like are always welcome and helpful to future plans.

Chapel Wood

The Roman Villa at Dicket Mead Welwyn was being excavated and used as our training and recruiting dig while serving as a base from which we sallied forth to watch construction and civil engineering work and we were amazed at the number of archaeological sites thus found in the Welwyn Garden City area just below the surface of what had until recently been farmland. Observation along the route of a natural gas pipe suggested that agricultural land everywhere contained a similar distribution of sites, and posed the question:

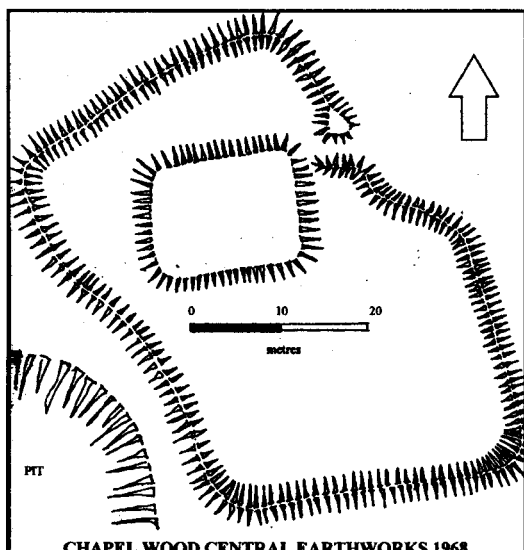


How much evidence of this could be discovered by intensively studying the surface of a small area of rural landscape?

The road which runs between Datchworth Green and Watton at Stone is on the alignment of one constructed by the Romans from Verulamium to Camulodunum (modern St Albans to Colchester). One field away from it (TL283188) to the north is a triangular, hornbeam, coppice called Chapel Wood. Its southern edge, which is approximately parallel to the road, is about 300m long and the other sides about 250m.

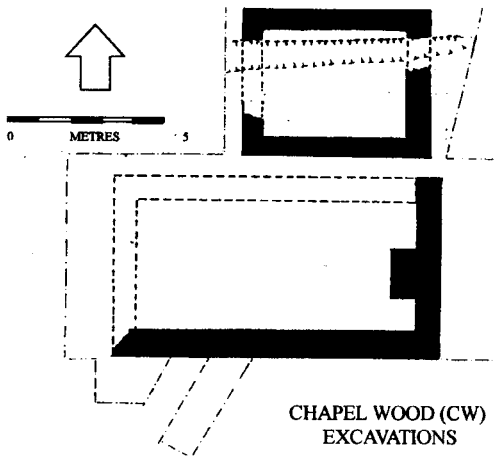
When we first visited it in 1969 we discovered that it was surrounded by astonishing boundary banks and ditches, and in the middle the trained eye could detect a small enclosure marked by banks, surrounding a raised platform, perhaps, we thought, the foundations of a house. On that occasion we met John Wallace (he caught WAS flagrantly trespassing on his land!) The place was ideal for teaching and practising archaeological surveying, and John was kind enough to allow WAS to use it for this purpose.

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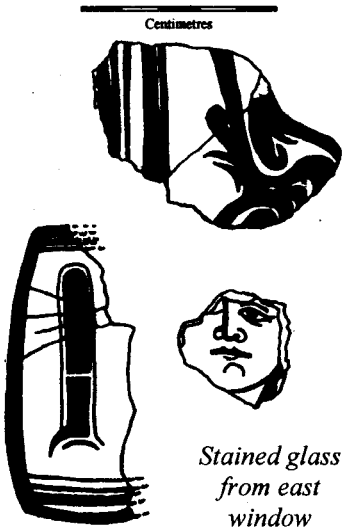
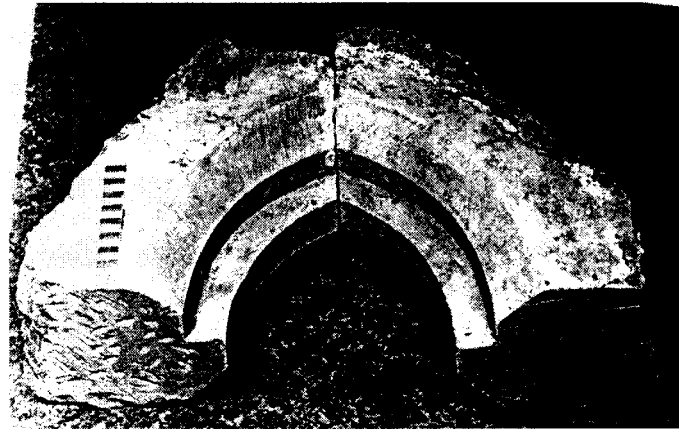
In 1975 a local group had dug a trench across the supposed house platform in Chapel Wood, found little and lost interest. The completion of the new motorway over the Dicket Mead in 1972 left us without a base. The hectic rescue work of the late 1960's suddenly ceased and it was a relief to be able to find a quiet rural site which we could use for a training dig whilst at the same time investigate how much archaeology the



area around would yield to simple scrutiny. John Wallace gave us permission to extend the abandoned excavation. It soon became clear that the area had been greatly disturbed both by humans and by badgers.

Within the platform were the foundations of two buildings. The southern one was about 34ft x 19ft (10.5m x 5.8m), with the axis east-west. Constructed in roughly coursed flint and mortar. The southern and eastern walls stood up to 5-6 courses high; the western and northern were apparently

robbed out to their bases, although, surprisingly, a few inches of interior plaster remained in place on parts of the latter. The south eastern corner made use of blocks of Totternhoe (clunch) stone. The north-eastern one made use of 10in x 6in (peg) roofing tiles. Against the east end wall on the inside was a rectangular



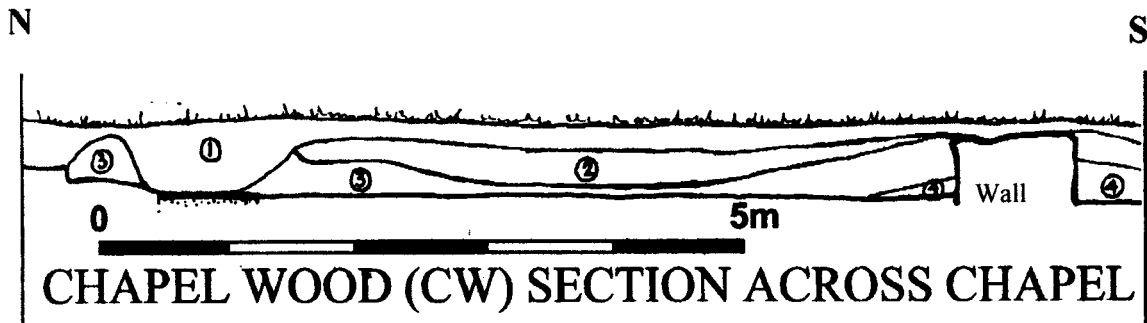
foundation of flint-rubble 5ft x 2ft (1.5m x 0.6m).

The damaged northern foundation, only one course high, was 19ft 6in x 14ft 8in (6m x 4.5m). The remains of a substantial building with its long axis east-west and with a masonry block at the east end, in a wood named Chapel Wood clearly suggested that it had been a chapel. And this idea was reported at an archaeological conference. The historians dissented. There was documentary evidence for only one chapel in the parish of Watton and its site, at Whemstead, 4km (2.5 miles) to the north-east was well known. Chapel Wood was named after some previous owner.

There was nothing to be seen at the site of

Whemstead chapel, but there was a comparable site at Chesfield, near Stevenage, where the walls of a ruined chapel stood to a considerable height. In the east wall was the tracery of window. This encouraged WAS to extend the Chapel Wood excavation to the east, where it uncovered the remains of the fallen gable, with not only the Totternhoe framework of at least two lancet windows, but small fragments of stained glass. Although the glass was

blackened and laminated like mica, traces of painting could just be seen by reflected light on two separate pieces: a painted face and what seemed to be a letter.



1. Dark loam with flints and tiles
2. Light brown soil with flint, tile and mortar rubble
4. Mortar and plaster rubble with crushed chalk
5. Ginger silt subsoil

Discussion

It is clear that the building in Chapel Wood *was* a chapel. The historic records throughout mention *the* chapel, suggesting that there had been only one. The first mention is its foundation by Henry (Fitzailwin) Mayor of London, who gave to it one carucate of land with appurtenances worth 40s p.a.. This must have been before Michaelmas 1212 as Henry was dead by that date.



The documentary evidence does not tell us whether the chapels at Whemstead and at Chapel Wood both existed concurrently at any time in their use. It seems likely that evidence is provided for the foundation of the Whemstead one in 1390 when a licence⁴ was granted to permit celebration of the mass at a chapel to honour The Virgin at a place called "La Lowe" by the Rector of Watton, John Dysford and at the same time the Bishop granted forty

days indulgence to all penitents who visited the chapel. In 1261-2 there is a reference to "the chapel of the hermitage of Watton". Does this explain the function of the small northern building?

Postscript

During the period of the excavation our survey appeared on the Ordnance Survey map and, without discussion with us, English Heritage scheduled Chapel Wood and Well Wood, thus preventing further excavation.

Despite this scheduling, a series of carefully shaped mounds was made in Chapel Wood in May 2005 by removing shallow areas of topsoil possibly as a track for Trail or BMX Bikes bicycles. These might confuse future investigators.

EDITORIAL FOOT NOTES

An occasional series of ramblings

This is the first of the series of reports covering the Societies activities and it is hoped that we can produce one for each of sites that we have excavated in that period, together with occasional articles on others that have affiliations with our membership. For instance we have one about a moated house site in Bushey , nr Watford that several of the diggers assisted a different stages with other in the pipeline.

With a fair wind behind us and the time it is intended that we shall produce a Newsletter roughly quarterly, at the beginning, middle and end of the Lecture Season with the last in mid summer to remind that it has all come around once again, however, some of this will depend on your interest (see below).

In addition if there are any other aspects of WAS that you would like to see reported or, indeed, would be happy to write about as contribution to our collective entertainment or learning please contact the Editor at the address below. Remember that illustrations are also welcome as are tales of adventures and general extra curricular activities that relate to archaeology in general, have you been somewhere, seen something or need some information to assist an understanding, ASK, I cannot guarantee an answer or that we will not end up with several and an argument. That's archaeology.

For those whose main contact with the Society is through the Newsletter we are always grateful for an input beyond simply paying a subscription, although this does help keep us in trowels and the like.

Perish the thought but we could actually circulate this little journal by e-mail to those who have and wish to use the facility. Save us paper, printing and postage into the bargain. Requests for this to the address below.

I make no apology for reprinting the first half of the Winter Lecture programme again if only to remind you of some of the very interesting subjects on the agenda that Daphne has arranged.

Claire Thornton is carried over

- September 30 **An introduction to Environmental Archaeology**
Claire Thornton
- October 14 **Recent excavations at Norwich Castle**
Liz Popescu
- October 28 **Before the Arab Revolt : T E Lawrence as
Archaeologist**
Jonathon Tubb
- October 15 **Autumn Outing**arwickshire : Warwick Castle and The Lunt
Roman Fort
- November 11 **The Great Northern railway through Welwyn**
George Howe
- November 25 **Tutankhamun :**
The little known Pharoah - his tomb and times
Peter Clayton
- December 9 **From Chapel Wood to Noviodunum (and back again)**
Dr Kris Lockyear
- December 17 **WAS Christmas Party**

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Claire Thornton's talk is carried over from last season when she was unable to be with us and Environmental Archaeology is about all those things that we have, as excavators, blissfully ignored in the past

Norwich Castle was the subject of a recent WAS outing

T. E. Lawrence as an Archaeologist, well I for one did not know about that aspect of his early life, First World War, Arabs, blowing up trains is my limit. There is so much to learn around here.

Great Northern Railway promises to be interesting and informative.

Our President is as ever bound to be both entertaining and instructive with more names than I, for one, can ever hope to remember.

While the star of the first half must be our own Kris Lockyear, and I have now managed to spell it correctly twice !, with the story of a life in archaeology from a schoolboy at Chapel Wood through to a professional academic running a major international site in Romania

Apologies for any errors omissions and eventually I will get the hang of this publishing programme Any one who knows me will recognise that I can on occasions go rambling on at the drop of an excuse but, having nearly reached the end of another page, and I must leave room for the promised contact information.

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