



# Newsletter 153

# Spring 2024

After an exceptionally wet January and February the second half of March has brought the arrival of Spring with flowers in the hedgerows and gardens and on the trees. Hopefully the worst of the winter weather is behind us and we will be able to get out in the field for another full season of excavation and geophysical surveying.

Since the last Newsletter we have had a successful season of lectures on a wide range of topics, undertaken some late Autumn, weather-affected fieldwork and made a successful application to Natural England to allow us to excavate at the site of the grandstands of Cheltenham's original racecourse on Cleeve Hill.

The new website has now been up and running for several months now and, apart from a couple of minor glitches, which were quickly resolved, seems to be going well. We have had positive feedback and better still it appears to have resulted in the recruitment of some 30 new members. A number of these have already got involved with fieldwork and we hope to see more of them at activities this year.

With regards to membership, it seems that the change of bank account last year from HSBC to the Co-op has resulted in a sizeable number of subscription payments not going through. As per my various recent emails can I ask members who have intended to renew this year to check that their payment has gone to the correct bank account. Payments to HSBC will have bounced back as we were unable to arrange for them to forward to the new account. The new bank account details can be found on the Homepage of the website.

## 57<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting

The 57<sup>th</sup> AGM will take place on **Monday 29<sup>th</sup> April at 7.00pm**, at St Andrew's URC church hall, Montpellier St Cheltenham, GL50 1SP and also live on Zoom. Please note the earlier start time for the AGM. The meeting will be followed by the April lecture at the slightly later time of 7:45pm. Papers for the AGM will be circulated to members by email and accompany this Newsletter for those not on email.

In addition to the usual reports, accounts and election of officers, we will be discussing a proposal to amend the title of our journal to better reflect its contents in recent years.

## 2023-24 Lecture series

We have had another season of excellent lectures organised by Neil Cathie. We started in September with Chiz Harward, of Urban Archaeology who gave us a detailed description of the findings from the renovations of Dulverton House at the King's School in Gloucester to create a modern Sixth Form centre. The building, dating from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, was once the lodgings of the Infirmarer of St Peter's Abbey.



Chiz described some of the fascinating features of the medieval building that were uncovered when later changes were removed: a massive carved wooden Samson post; ancient doorway, the 13<sup>th</sup> century water channel for the monastery and the last remnant of the 12<sup>th</sup> century St Bridget's chapel, to name but a few.

The October lecture had to be postponed at the last minute due to illness, but took place in January instead. In November we were treated to a fascinating talk by Professor Chris Fowler of Newcastle University. Chris' team, in conjunction with Sanger Centre in London, have teased out the relationships of the individuals buried in the Neolithic Hazleton North long barrow on the Cotswolds. Analysis of ancient DNA from the bones recovered from the barrow in the 1970s demonstrated that there were descendants of four women who partnered the same man. They were grouped in separate chambers according to the woman from whom they were descended. This was a remarkable insight into the workings of a Neolithic society.

December was the annual fieldwork update delivered by myself and Neil Cathie. As we get more active in the field, it is getting harder to fit everything in. Neil described the excavations at Brookthorpe, Minsterworth and the preliminary investigation at Miserden, whilst I covered the geophysics at Cleeve Hill and Castlemeads.

In January and February, for various reasons, we returned to the Zoom-only format. Thanks to David Hughes for stepping up to run the technology in my absence. January saw the rescheduled talk by Jon Hart, delayed from October, on the Invisible Potters of Domesday Haresfield. In addition to a farming landscape, probably of long history, the excavation by Cotswold Archaeology of a farmstead found unused pottery and wasters, indicating that this was the site of manufacture of the Haresfield potters recorded in the Domesday Book. The farmstead was demolished in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century and was lost to history until Cotswold's excavation.

In February we were grateful to Kate Rennicks Jacklin for stepping into the breach after late withdrawal of a speaker, to give a talk on the significance of Medieval lead tokens and how little stories can make big journeys. The talk related to her experience at the substantial Cistercian Hulme Cultram abbey in a remote corner of West Cumbria. A sizeable collection of lead tokens of various designs were recovered during excavation of the site of the chapter house. The study of these poorly studied artefacts and the function of tokens in this and other societies was the subject of the talk. Tokens appear to have had a range of uses, from conferring the right to trade, as a substitute for small change, to providing to the poor to exchange for food. There appears to be a link to Cistercian abbeys, and at Holme Cultram there may have been a relationship to places

owned by the abbey. Kate concluded that the tokens were local produced as proof or promise in the face of hardship.



## **Summer Programme 2024**

### **St John the Baptist Church, Cirencester.**

**11th May 2024 at 2pm**

This will be a guided visit to one of the largest parish churches in England, with history dating back over a thousand years. The church is in the market square of the historic town of Cirencester, home to the Corinium museum. The tour costs £5. In order to ensure there are sufficient guides available please let Mike Milward know by **1 May** if you plan to attend. His email is [m.milward1@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:m.milward1@yahoo.co.uk)

We will be meeting in Cirencester by the church 1.45pm

## **Coach Tour to Avalon Archaeology and Wells.**

**June 8<sup>th</sup> 2024.**

For the first time since the pandemic, GlosArch is running a full day visit by coach to places of archaeological interest.

The trip will take us to Avalon Archaeology on the Somerset Levels, which was Highly Commended at the recent CBA Archaeological Achievement Awards. We will travel by coach from Cheltenham to Avalon Archaeology where we will have a guided tour of the site with its



reconstructions of Iron Age, Roman, Saxon and Viking buildings from Somerset and the option to visit the Bronze Age Sweet Track. In the afternoon we will move on to Wells where we can explore the Cathedral, Museum and Bishop's Palace or just enjoy walking around the City. The cost of the trip is £42.20 which includes the coach and the guided tour of Avalon

Archaeology. Admission to the attractions in Wells is extra and payable on the day to the venues. The coach will leave Cheltenham Racecourse Park and Ride at 0815 and will also pick up at Oxstalls Campus in Gloucester at 0840.

The trip is dependent on a minimum number of 20 participants.

To sign up for a place, please email Mike Milward at [m.milward1@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:m.milward1@yahoo.co.uk)



## Gloucester Roman Walls

**Date to be confirmed.**

The walk following the course of the Roman walls of Gloucester, led by Andrew Armstrong, which had to be cancelled last year, is being planned for some time in June. Further details will be circulated once they are finalised.

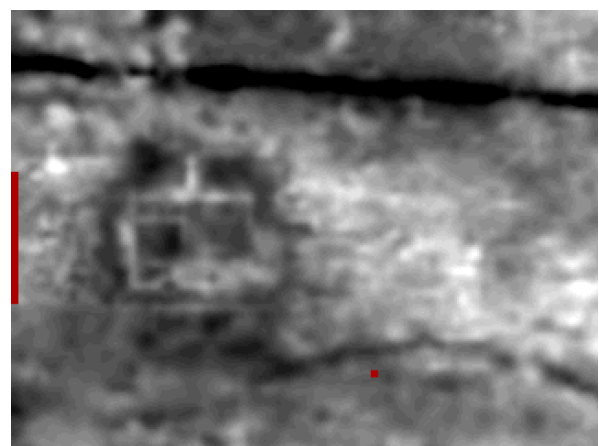
## Forthcoming Fieldwork

### Cleeve Common - Excavation of the grandstands of the original Cheltenham Racecourse.

**14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

Following the granting of permission by Natural England to excavate at this site, within the Cleeve Common SSSI we will be starting the 2024 digging season on Cleeve Hill.

Horse racing took place on the top of Cleeve Common from 1819 to 1842 and in its heyday attracted crowds of 30,000 people. In the 1820's a wooden grandstand was constructed, but this was destroyed by fire in 1829. It was replaced, in 1835, by a second grandstand built of Cotswold stone and visible from the Promenade in Cheltenham. When racing ceased the building was sold and the materials were removed. Following the identification of a possible site of the grandstand on LIDAR, GlosArch undertook resistivity and magnetometry surveys, which confirm the presence of the remains of one building, probably the later grandstand. The excavation will seek to discover more about the layout of this building, locate the site of the earlier one and learn a little more



about 19<sup>th</sup> century horse racing.

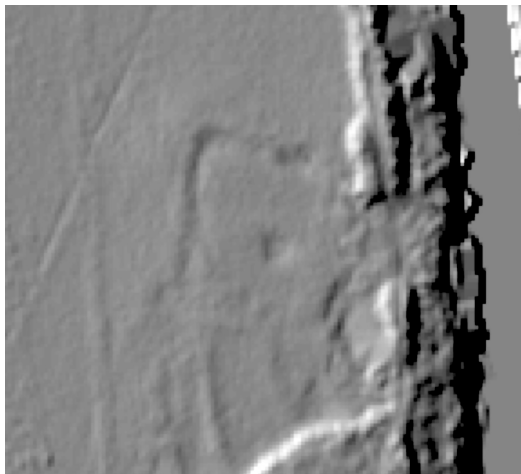
The excavation is open to all members of GlosArch and no previous experience of archaeological excavation is required. To book a place on this exciting dig, email [fieldwork@glosarch.org.uk](mailto:fieldwork@glosarch.org.uk) or message dig director, Neil Cathie on 07802 272035.

We are also planning to continue excavation at Miserden and Severn Bank during the coming months and we also aim to undertake some more geophysical surveying at Castlemeads, Gloucester in June. Details of these activities will be emailed to members as dates are confirmed.

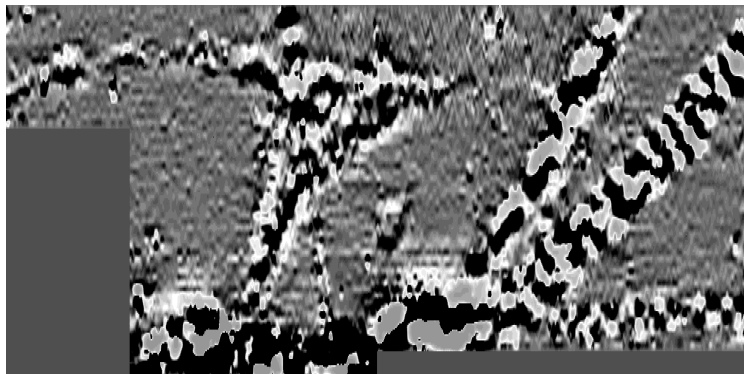
## Recent Fieldwork

### Castlemeads Magnetometry

In December a hardy band of GlosArch members undertook a magnetometry survey of earthworks identified by LIDAR on Castlemeads, Gloucester, a low-lying meadow across the River Severn from the former Gloucester prison (which is on the site of Gloucester Castle). After an interruption for flooding, we managed to complete the survey.



As suspected, we identified a number of deeply-buried electricity cables, but in addition there



appear to be some other features, which may represent buried archaeology - possibly relating to a small Medieval bridge over the river to the castle.

We are hoping to follow-up with a ground penetrating radar survey this year, and possibly some limited excavation.

## Brookthorpe

Also in November we returned to Brookthorpe in the quest to identify the last remains relating to the Roman villa that was largely destroyed when the M5 was built. In very difficult conditions we managed to locate an area of cobbled courtyard, but the remaining walls of the villa continues to be elusive. We did add to our haul of Roman building materials and tesserae, but it appears that what is left of the villa probably lies beyond the motorway boundary fence.

## Other Activities of Interest

### Gloucester History Festival - Spring Weekend

12-14<sup>th</sup> April 2024.



# Gloucester History Festival

The Gloucester History Festival Spring Weekend takes place from 12-14<sup>th</sup> April. There is a sparkling line-up of talks across a wide range of topics from the Prehistoric origins of the Incense Route to the modern day.

Subject areas being covered are: Power and Politics; Royal Rebels; Crossing Continents; and Unlocking Hidden Histories with speakers including Jeremy Bowen, Janina Ramirez, Michael Wood, Dom Joly, Chris Packham, Philippa Langley and Phil Moss, to name but a few.

The full programme can be accessed at <https://www.gloucesterhistoryfestival.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/GHF-24-Spring-programme-online.pdf>

Bookings are open and can be made via the Festival website: <https://www.gloucesterhistoryfestival.co.uk/>

## CBA Festival of Archaeology 2024

13-28<sup>th</sup> July 2024

This year the CBA Festival of Archaeology will be themed around “Archaeology and Community in 2024”. This year marks the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Council for British Archaeology and the festival aims to celebrate the community groups and individuals that share the passion for archaeology. Events are already appearing on the CBA website and can be found at:

<https://www.archaeologyuk.org/festival/festival-event-listing.html>

We are looking for ideas for activities we could host, either ourselves or in collaboration with other organisations. If you have a suggestion, please email me at [mailbox@glosarch.org.uk](mailto:mailbox@glosarch.org.uk)