



# Newsletter

## No 112: Summer 2020

**Dear Friends,**

Well it has certainly been a difficult few months for us all but I hope that you have stayed safe and well. I am afraid that this FCAT Newsletter (112) is not as big as usual and not produced to the professional standards that you have come to expect, but CAT's programme of archaeological work has been hit hard, although important discoveries continue to be made, some CAT staff are still on furlough and consequently production of NLT112 has been more difficult. So this is very much a home-spun newsletter. In the past we have had 'bumper' issues and hopefully in the future we will again. I trust that you all understand.

To keep you all in touch we have communicated during the lockdown with those of you for whom we have an email address, sending you news of what has been happening and providing you with three *What, where and when?* which I hope you have found interesting and perhaps have distracted you a little from the world around. In sending information out to Friends we have been conscious that we do not have email addresses for a number of Friends, perhaps because you did not have an email address or did not give it to us when you joined FCAT, perhaps because you changed email address without letting us know or perhaps because it got 'modified' in some way in our records. We are obviously keen to keep our membership lists up-to-date. Another consideration is that, because, for health reasons, we did not want to use our volunteer 'postmen' for delivering the Annual Review and NLT 112 we have substantially increased our postage costs this time. We are still happy for you to receive Newsletters and the Annual review in hard copy if that is what you prefer but if you would be happy to receive them digitally please let us know – all issues of both are available on the web site. So

- if you have received this time the Annual Review and Newsletter in hard copy and are happy to receive either or both digitally please let our membership secretary, Shiela Broomfield know at [memsecFCAT@canterburytrust.co.uk](mailto:memsecFCAT@canterburytrust.co.uk)
- if you have received everything digitally this time round and would like either or both in hard copy please again let Shiela know
- if you have received an insert with this posting indicating that we do not have an email address and yet you do have one please again let Shiela know, so that we can keep in touch with you better.

I can assure you that we do not pass on Friends' email addresses or any other details to any other organisations, that we send out all communications to Friends using Google Groups so you do not know who else is receiving them and that we are careful only send to you information about CAT and the archaeology and history of Canterbury and the adjoining area.

As you saw in Newsletter 111 we have an interesting series of talks arranged for the autumn. It may well be advisable not to hold 'live' talks in an enclosed space, indeed it may not be possible. The Friends have recently bought a Zoom licence for the Trust (an upgrade over that which is available for free) and we will be looking at whether it is possible, following the example of a number of other heritage organisations, for us to deliver any of the autumn talks via Zoom – another reason to let us have an email address for you. It is easy to participate in a Zoom session.

At our committee meeting in mid-June we also considered the CAT walks' programme that Doreen Rosman so successfully organises as part of Canterbury Festival. We understand that there is still an intention for the festival to take place, although in a reduced format, but I am afraid that some decisions have to be taken early, and concerns about how to deliver a walk for 25 persons while maintaining any social distancing and the fact that many of the walks involve going inside buildings led the committee to decide that we would not offer any walks in connection with this year's Canterbury Festival – but hopefully we will be back as normal next year.

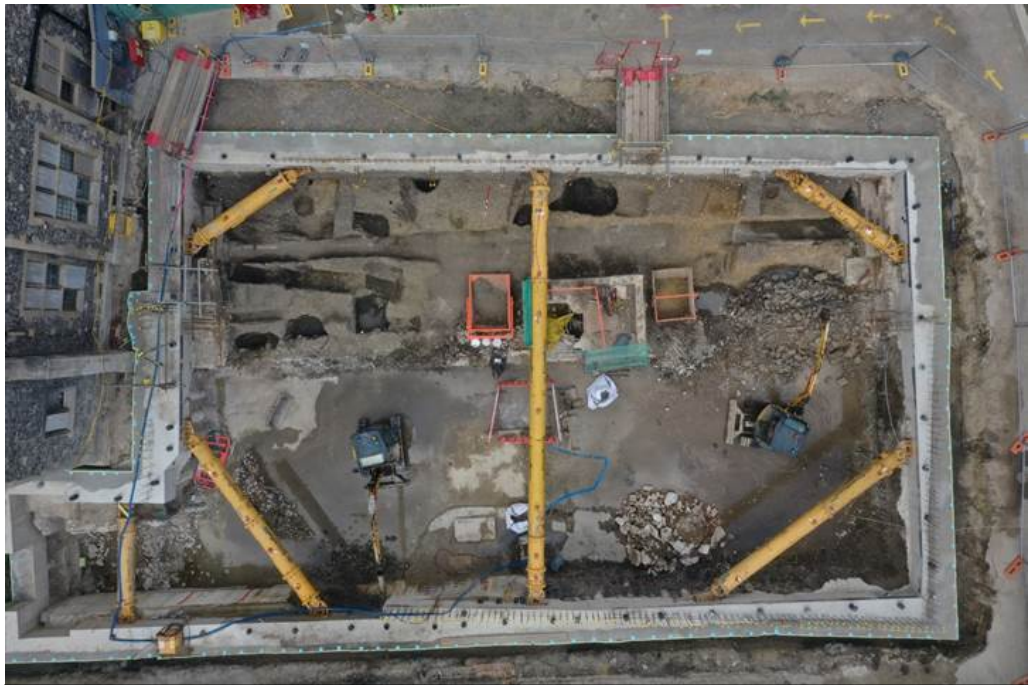
Well, there you have it from me. In Paul's letter you will learn about some very exciting discoveries that are continuing to be made. Please bear with us and continue to support the Trust.

John Williams, *Chair FCAT*

## Dear Friends,

Despite strange times, the Trust has managed to keep going, with enhanced risk assessments in place on two important sites, the Mint Yard of the King's School and St Mary Bredin School near the East Station. Our work for the Cathedral Journey has also restarted. I have space to talk about one excavation in some detail and will just touch upon the others.

In the Mint Yard, former Mitchinson House has been demolished. We are excavating the basement extension, some forty years on from our excavation in advance of the construction of Mitchinson's. The most significant discovery in 1979 was of the well-preserved foundations of the almonry chapel built by Prior Henry Eastry in 1317. The chapel flanked the south side of the Almonry Yard and was connected to a distribution hall (where food was given out to the poor). After the Dissolution the chapel was ceded to the Crown and eventually housed the King's School in 1573. The building was demolished in 1865.



*Mint Yard: Drone image of the excavations within the northern part of the new coffer dam. The Roman street is aligned SE to NW*



*Mint Yard: Excavating features cutting the Roman street looking east. The beam slot and post-holes form part of an Early Anglo-Saxon building.*

Construction of Mitchinson House had seen the removal of all the chapel walls and the truncation of a substantial area. Little of the later history of the site has survived but a good sequence of post-Roman loams capped the latest Roman levels, together with a number of tenth- to mid-twelfth-century rubbish pits. Extending diagonally across the excavation is a major Roman street. Aligned SE to NW, this was probably the northernmost *cardo* in the Roman grid, and it would have formed a major junction with a SW to NE street approaching the North Gate a short way W of the present site. Cutting into the latest surface of the road was an early Anglo-Saxon sunken-featured building, probably of sixth- or seventh-century date. The latest road was accompanied by a side drain. The upper fills of the ditch and soak-away contained a significant number of human bones, perhaps parts of two individuals. Their presence within the walls in the Roman period was contrary to the law and suggests a break-down in civic discipline and a period of abandonment. This may have been brought about by conflict but more likely by a major outbreak of plague, that saw individuals left unburied in the streets. The bones were no longer articulated, but they were deliberately buried in pre-existing features, suggesting that the population eventually returned. Similar examples of this form of irregular and unlawful burial have been found at Adelaide Place, on Whitefriars and most recently at Slatters, all perhaps dating from the late fourth century.

We are presently cutting sections across the road to discover how many times the road was re-metalled with rammed gravel and we are excavating Roman period rubbish pits to the south of the road.

We know from our previous work that the road was laid out around AD 80 over an ancient watercourse. In coming days we will be removing the entire road to a primary metalling and then eventually investigating preserved organic paleo-channel deposits below the water table.

Equally exciting and nationally important work is taking place at the former St Mary Bredin School. Here, having removed the clay rampart of an outer bailey for a conquest period motte and bailey castle, we are presently excavating a late Anglo-Saxon complex of buildings and pits, demolished to make way for the earthwork in 1066. The complex may have been the Anglo-Saxon predecessor of the Dane John manor. Capped by agricultural loam to the SW of the complex is evidence for Anglo-Saxon settlement of seventh- or eighth-century date, characterised by a pebble-strewn ground surface with burnt clay and at least six rubbish pits containing metalworking waste. Elsewhere agricultural loam caps Roman deposits and features, including a late Roman track aligned parallel to the city wall, and beneath are prehistoric features.

At the Cathedral, a small team is completing excavations in advance of landscaping for the Cathedral Journey. Our most recent work at Christchurch Gate has exposed a series of interesting metallised surfaces bearing wheel ruts, and small elements of the first gate in this position, built in 1201, replaced by the present gate completed in 1520. Elsewhere a number of evaluations and watching briefs have been completed, with senior staff kept busy providing quotations and specifications for future work. A number of post-excavation projects have been progressed during lock-down including a marvellously illustrated report by James Holman on our excavations in advance of the First Time Sewerage scheme for New Romney. We hope that this will be available soon.

Finally, I take great pleasure in reporting to Friends, that fresh from his triumphs with the Lottery-funded St Eanswyth project in Folkestone, Andrew Richardson has been amazingly successful with an application to Historic England, for a grant to help us increase our on-line presence and heritage outreach (see page 4). There were over 300 applications with a value in excess of £6 million for a grant total of £2 million. We were one of just forty successful applicants. Well done Andrew.

We still have a few furloughed staff, but in coming weeks we hope all our staff will be back at work. Stay safe everyone and stand-by for an interesting Frank Jenkins lecture in 2021.

*Paul Bennett, Director*

## **Nigel Macpherson-Grant - 1947-2020**

*Paul Bennett writes:* I am sorry to inform you of the sudden and unexpected death of a former employee of the Trust and a highly respected pottery specialist, our friend, Nigel Macpherson-Grant.



Nigel was employed by the Trust in the earliest days of Tim Tatton-Brown, to work at Highstead near Chislehurst. In 1975 the site was being quarried for gravel by Bretts and, following the excavation of a Roman corn-drier by Frank Jenkins and members of the Canterbury Archaeological Society, Nigel was appointed by Tim to supervise much larger excavations on the hilltop, largely staffed by novices paid by the Manpower Services Commission Community Programme. The work proved to be highly complex and largely prehistoric, capping the 30m (100ft) gravel terrace. Assisted by Peter Keller and Nick Riall, both experienced archaeologists, two sites were excavated during one of the hottest summers in living memory and one of the coldest winters, with prevailing winds blowing directly from the Urals. It was one of Nigel's greatest achievements, and, as with many of his publications, an enduring legacy.

I met Nigel for the first time some ten years before this in 1965, when we were both working on an Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Finglesham under the direction of Sonia Hawkes. This was my first day on my first excavation and I had crashed my bicycle. I was anxiously looking into the distance for signs of the excavation whilst freewheeling down a steep hill and didn't spot the pothole. Having performed a spectacular summersault over the handle bars, it was dear old Nigel who extracted me from a very thorny bush and thus started a life-long friendship. After the most wonderful summer digging with

Nigel under the watchful but benevolent eye of Sonia, the marvellous Mary James who owned the site and Sonia's archaeology students from Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, I went on to do 'O' and 'A' levels and a degree at Manchester University. Nigel took a different path, that of an itinerant archaeologist, leading or assisting with excavations at Stonar, Ickham, along the A2 and Lord of the Manor cross roads, to mention just a few, whilst developing an abiding and all-consuming passion for pottery of all periods.

So our paths re-aligned at Highstead and our journey together continued for nearly twenty years, with Nigel now one of the Trust's pottery specialists. Nigel established the Trust's pottery type series spanning all periods. He was keen on prehistoric pottery but his great love was Anglo-Saxon and medieval ceramics. Most of our publications include seminal contributions from him. He supplied the British Museum with a selection of Canterbury and Kentish ceramics for its own type series, and developed a sound reputation for his work regionally and nationally. There were periods when budding pottery specialists came to Canterbury to learn from Nigel and many ceramicists now embedded in units or museums or working independently were infected by his knowledge of and enthusiasm for the study of pottery. He was also a gifted illustrator who drew his own pots for publication and trained many others in the discipline. This is also no small part of his legacy.

It was not all plain sailing. Nigel was challenged with hearing voices. There were times when the noise became overwhelming and unbearable, making it impossible for him to work. Over the years we worked together, many hours were spent discussing ways of overcoming this illness. These were amateur therapy sessions, one friend helping another, and I like to think it was good for us both. Fortunately most days were good, but it was an issue he struggled with to the last. Nigel was greatly loved by all those who knew him. He was a gentle, soft-spoken, thoughtful mystic of a man; an eccentric who in another life could have been a hermit or a stoic. His life was stripped to the bare essentials. Sandals and a woolly hat - there were few frills or clutter. Other than the basics (bread, cheese, coffee and roll-ups), just a place to spread-out pottery, a computer to record the material on and a drawing board to illustrate. He dreamt of living in a caravan surrounded by nature and pottery. In this I believe he was looking back to one of the happiest times, excavating at the Lord of the Manor crossroads on Thanet. His Spartan flat in Margate was pretty close to the dream.

Nigel left the Trust in 1995 during a particularly difficult period when the demon voices took over. He recovered, returning to Thanet, the island he loved most, setting up his stall as a free-lance specialist, working for most of the major units in the South of England and for volunteer groups across the County, and more recently training others in the art of dating and illustrating ceramics. He did wonderful work with the Trust for Thanet Archaeology and with the Isle of Thanet Archaeological Society of which he was President at the time of his death.

Although he had been troubled with serious illness in recent years, his death on May 28<sup>th</sup> was unexpected and came as a great shock to us all. But rather than regretting the loss of all that knowledge and of a wonderful eccentric, we should celebrate his life and the enormous contribution Nigel has made to the study of Kent's archaeological ceramics. As he used to say to me, he was 'laying down a foundation for others to build upon'.

## Unlocking Canterbury's Archaeology

In response to the pandemic, Historic England launched a two million pound 'Covid-19 Emergency Response Fund', offering Resilience Grants of up to £50,000 to eligible heritage organisations. Canterbury Archaeological Trust created a project proposal and submitted a bid ahead of the May 3 deadline. I'm delighted to be able to say that we were successful and have been awarded just under £45,000 for a project entitled 'Unlocking Canterbury's Archaeology'. The aim of this project, which will take place over the next six months, is to improve significantly the Trust's online presence and engagement. The project will entail training, both for staff and volunteers, that will leave us much better equipped to create virtual content and resources, and to engage remotely with our partners, volunteers and audiences. The project will also see the creation of a virtual finds showcase, highlighting some of the most significant and interesting finds recovered by the Trust over the past five decades, as well as content on exotic material culture in Kent and new educational resources. It is absolutely a project in which volunteer input is wanted and needed. Any Friends wishing to get involved should contact me at [andrew.richardson@canterburytrust.co.uk](mailto:andrew.richardson@canterburytrust.co.uk) and I will add you to the list!

*Andrew Richardson*

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