

## On the Ranch

***“Move ‘em on, ride ‘em out. Ride ‘em oouut Rawhiiiiiiide, RAWHIDE!”***

So where in the woo-ha did 2018 go I hear y’all shout?! This is what we did.....

We started, continued and /or completed field work at Pen Selwood, Stapleton Farm (Yandle’s), Wincanton, Ilchester (Gallows Field), Coombe St Nicholas and Bruton. We have also continued to work away at the post-ex on a number of sites mentioned above, particularly Pen Selwood and Stapleton Farm, whilst supporting members as they pursue projects outside of the SSARG programme.

We’ve been to a variety of destinations on field visits including Dorset Museum developments, Milbourne Port hillfort and the Roman temple at Lydney Park Estate in Gloucestershire (before they lifted the tolls-who’d would’ve though they would actually do it?!). We also re-visited Wells cathedral just before Christmas as reported above.

So a large proportion of ‘where does time go?’ comes our way, and for that we thank you. SSARG members and volunteers and the Committee, all the land owners and people who’ve allowed us in and to all the people, groups and establishments who’ve made us feel most welcome when we turn up with all the ‘difficult’ questions and dubious behaviour!

With regard to fieldwork for 2019, the theme is likely to be test pitting rather than extended open excavations. Here is a list of the scheduled test pitting by location:

- Stapleton Farm – A series of test pits located on the various anomalies identified by the geophysics (magnetometry) survey. Numbers and locations to be arranged.
- Pen Selwood – A limited number of test pits, possibly on the features on the Western side of the site or possibly in the field to the North of ‘Home pitts’.
- Sandford Orcas – 2 test pits to complete Giles Cooper’s research on the village that were postponed before Christmas.
- Misterton – a short series of test pits on a variety of anomalous features in Field #2 (south of the train track).
- Wincanton – 3 test pits on the large anomaly previously in the field directly behind (east) of the Holbrook Spa Hotel.

So it’s pits this season with a sprinkling of geophysics where appropriate. Unit work will commence again on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> January at the farm. Our first and priority work is to quantify the total pottery recovered from Stapleton Farm excavations. This will include years 2013, 14, 15, 16, and 2017, although 2014 & 2017 (Dryer building) can probably be combined. This work has been started, though not completed and is being carried out in preparation for a grant application for the pottery to be studied and written up by an eminent Romanist! If you’re interested in helping then please use the contact details above to inform us of your interest.

The second post-ex session with Pen Selwood history group is scheduled for this month, with one or two more sessions to arrange. This session will be conducted by Nessie and myself. Places are limited to the members of the Pen group at this early stage of the work. However further opportunities to get involved will be available as the project progresses.

Finally I would like to take a little time & space to remember one of the originators of the SSARG project, Duncan Black, who died on Boxing Day 10 years ago.

Duncan was instrumental in setting up SSARG out of the previous SCEPT project, in which he was also heavily involved. Neil (Chair), Clare (Research Director) and Liz (Deputy Chair) all studied and worked with Duncan over a number of years.

Duncan also played a large part in getting local and regional WWII buildings logged with the Somerset HER and also played a major role in salvaging hundreds of Naval records, that were about to be junked by the records office at Kew in London. The archive is now held at the Fleet Air Arm museum, Yeovilton. He also gave many voluntary hours to the museum, and was a vocal supporter of all things heritage. He was also a really funny, pleasant and amiable, also grumpy and irascible at times. I can almost still hear him saying to someone/anyone/me: 'Not necessarily'! He was a founding member of the Pylon (yes Pylon) Appreciation Society and a bloody pedant! And I still miss him!



*Cheers Duncan Y'old rascal Ya. Not forgotten*

Happy New Year everyone. 'Take it easy, but take it' (Studs Terkel) Nigel H'Tron