

Down on the Farm - Burying Dead Dogs & Dancing in Devizes

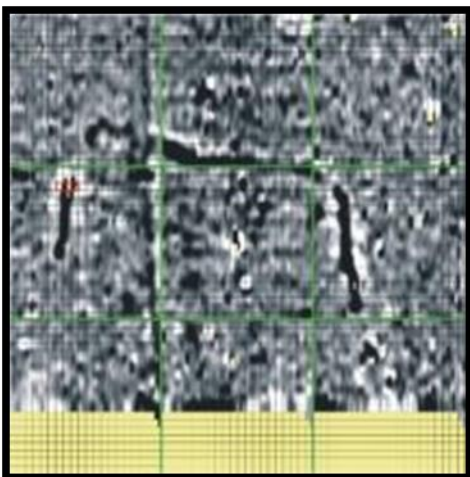
Yo Ssarganistas! Well the field work preparations are now under way

At Tithe Mead we will be meeting with the James, Maggie & Richard Yandle (land owners) to arrange for an area of the field to be fenced off for us. We are currently assessing the information we have so far gathered to identify the best possible place to excavate. The excavation is likely to be open for a number of weeks so we can be more ambitious about what we decide to look at and the geophysics and test pitting/trial trenching suggest that there are numerous targets for investigation in a relatively small area of the field(s). I say fields because crop marks appear to show that fields to north and east of our target area also busy. Our work programme will include:

- further geophysical surveying, both of the field which is our focal point (Tithe Mead) and its surrounding environs;
- continuing the TP/TR regime to try and identify anomalies which are likely to be outside of our area of excavation;
- desk based research (with input from Dave at Martock History Group) looking at any relevant maps/documentation which will help inform us of previous layout and use of the area.

Brian & I will continue to liaise with Fergus and Will with Martock History Group. This element of the project is essential as you all know we inherited this undertaking from MHG on the sad death of Doug Gurzinski. We are also in the process of initiating links with John Davey and the Tintinhull Local History Group who are undertaking the Tintinhull and Regional Landscape Project.

At Misterton we've recently dug a small (2mx1m) trial trench on a feature in the field north of the train track (see images below).



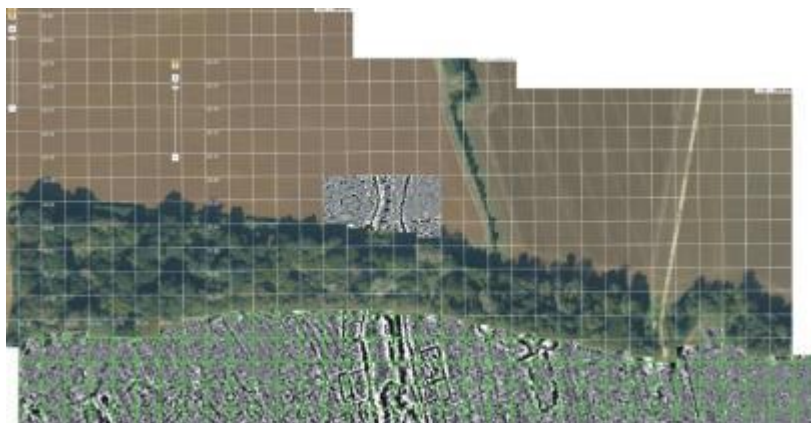
Our initial findings suggest a middle-late Bronze Age enclosure. We had some small sherds of pottery and several small/medium struck flints. The preservation of the archaeology is fair-good, though markedly different from the archaeology immediately south - a greater depth and far fewer finds than the area we've looked at in the fields to the south. More work will be undertaken when the fields become available to us in the autumn of this year. Somehow, despite our best efforts to be discreet (yeah right!), within an hour of our arrival, the

good residents of Misterton were convinced we were actually burying the carcasses of dead dogs in the field. We weren't! Though it could be arranged.....! A huge thanks to Nessie, without whom it would not have been possible to start and finish in 2 days as agreed with the land owner, also thanks to Ski for negotiating access to the site. Goodwork You guys!



James & the Newcastle Uni crew will be with us at the end of the month. Re-surveying of the target area has been done. The target area for this season's excavation is in the field immediately to the south of the Lufton Villa site, called Hungerford. The geophysics plot certainly suggests the team are going to be busy. Well done to all the SSARG volunteers who got places, have a splendid time, I hope you all take something from the experience and, more importantly, have fun!

Next! Great Ground?! Well this project is proving to be most interesting. We've done a small 'prospecting' survey and, yes, the huge feature identified in Main Road Field (formerly known as Great Ground) does continue over the river Cam and heads approximately north/north-east (see image below).



As you can see from the illustration, it's another huge area to cover (this being a small portion of total field), so we intend to divide the area into quadrants. If you would like to see how this fits into the wider landscape I suggest you look on Google Earth. The field(s) are located immediately North of Cadbury hillfort, along the north side of the A303. This project is all about surveying in this initial stage so anybody interested in learning how to conduct archaeological geophysical surveying, this is for YOU, though ultimately we will be doing some excavations here at a later date.

The work at Park is currently on hold as we're already spread rather thin presently.

Finally SSARG (advance & reconnaissance party) visited Devizes museum recently. The museum was set up in the mid-19th century in the building that used to be Devizes Grammar School. The collection is housed in numerous rooms (27, I believe) dotted around the building. The displays were very well set out, with each room's focus being a particular theme based on time phasing and significant artefacts from the Wiltshire environs. The museum has a wealth of artefacts from prehistory, exhibiting the rich diversity of material

culture throughout this period. We were privileged to have a conducted tour undertaken by David Dawson (another one!) who showed a deep knowledge and great enthusiasm for this period in history. We were all made to feel very welcome and were also left to wander as suited our tastes (never got to the Roman wool!) which was that much better having been so well informed on the tour. Thanks David Dawson & Devizes Museum, you did well by us. My impression was that everybody thoroughly enjoyed the visit greatly .

Nigel H