Down on the Ranch

Through all the rain, then the heat, then the rain again we've managed to complete Trench 1 in Lower Weathergrove at Sandford Orcas. The trench, 2m x 2m with a depth of 1m 10cm at its deepest, made for some serious excavating before we came down onto the archaeology. The 'feature' comprised a large deposit of mixed stone including yellow and possibly green sandstone, limestone and a small number of lias fragments. The stone was a mix of completely burnt stone, heat affected stone and stone completely unaffected by heat/fire. There didn't appear to be any sign of a cut around the stone deposit so it was unlikely to be part of a structure but most likely a deposit of re-used stone brought from somewhere else on the site.

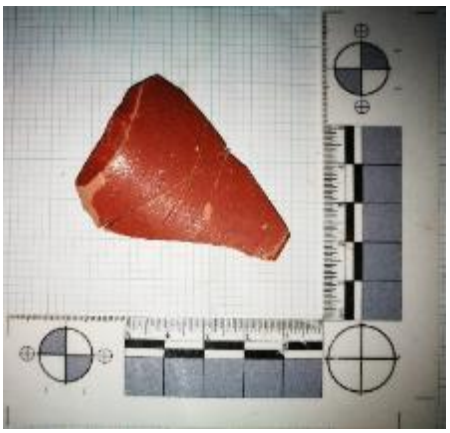
Stone Deposit TR1

Stone Deposit TR1

The archaeological components recovered included pottery, bone, several fragments of quern stone and a fragment of a shale bracelet. On first inspection the pottery seems to be Roman (two types of Samian; BB1 and Romano-British/Iron Age), early medieval (Norman, possibly Saxo-Norman) and later medieval and post-med. One metal object was recovered, though the condition means we're not yet able to identify what it actually is, if anything.

Fragment Shale Bracelet

Quern Fragment



Samian Pottery

The post-ex analysis and reporting/writing will take place once we've returned later in the year to complete Trench 2, the rectilinear 'system' of banks and ditches to the south of Trench 1 and possibly Trench 3 over the large anomaly that cuts from the river bank to the hedge. We haven't scheduled these two trenches yet as we're having to move 'things' around due to the weather. It's likely that we'll return in the late autumn,

subject to access being made available. SSARG would like to thank Mr. Richard Horsington for the easy and open access to the site, to Giles and Dee Cooper for keeping an eye on us and supplying us with all the tea and biscuits, to all the local folk who called by and generally expressed an interest, and finally and once again the SSARGanistas who turned out and made it happen.

We've moved straight on to Stapleton Farm with the Yandle family. Our work this season is predominately moving out of Tithe Mead and into the surrounding fields of Hens Leaze (hal'penny) and Hammers Close to look at the large enclosure which straddles all three fields.

Trench Locations 2019

Tithe Map with field names

After resurveying the trench locations, we opened up tr2 and tr3. Trench 3 proved to be a deposit of burnt material, probably associated with clearance. This was cleaned back, recorded and then back filled.



Adrian and Tom (student) recording TR3

Trench 2, which contained the long linear anomaly, was then opened but we were unable to get down to the ditch in the time we had available. It was agreed that we would backfill, re-survey to confirm the location of the anomaly within the grid and return to it when we re-open the trench.

We were pleased to have a student, Tom Cravero from Ashford Academy, with us for the week. He was actively involved in all aspects of the work carried out from geophysics to de-turfing to excavating, recording and back filling. He was a pleasure to have around and I would like to thank all the volunteers who worked alongside Tom and made him feel welcomed and at ease. Good work all round!

Geophysing at Tithe Mead

Taking tea in the shade

We will now move into Hammers Close, resurvey the trench locations and open up Trenches 4 and 7 initially. We will be out at Stapleton Farm on Tuesdays and Thursdays for the foreseeable future. Weekends will be made available should the numbers allow. It is likely that we will postpone trench 6 until further notice.

We will also be scheduling a return to Sandford Orcas for later in the year, a return to Misterton and Penselwood. Details to follow when we have information available.

We will also be doing a small number of evaluation trenches at Wincanton, though this isn't open to the membership at this initial stage, we anticipate further work based on the evaluation trenches.

Finally, I would like to thank Adrian Ruddle for offering me the opportunity to accompany him on a glider flight recently. It was a fantastic experience and offered a very different perspective on the landscape (there's a lot of swimming pools!).

That's it from here. Stay Cool; Stay Classy and enjoy the weather whilst we've got it. Rock-On

Nigel 'Tron