

Liss Archaeology AGM

Wednesday 27 March 2024

Attendees: 30 members

1. **Introduction** to the meeting by Keith Baker - Chairman.

2. **Apologies for absence:**

Andrea Hay, Mark Taylor, Soo Harris, Simon White, Jane Hurst, Susan Plumb, Stuart Rippon, Jessica Butt, Sally Pritchard and Carl Raven.

3. **Approval of Minutes of 2023 AGM.**

The draft Minutes have been on the website since 27 February 2024. No comments or corrections received. Minutes approved. Proposed by David Quick and seconded by Ann Brookes.

4. **Matters Arising.**

No comments were made in relation to Matters Arising.

5. **Chairman's Report.**

Colemore - May

We started a dig on our Colemore site investigating new locations from our geophysics scans. We opened four trenches but found only two were significant – BBB and EEE. In addition, towards the end of the dig, we opened up a test pit adjacent to the largest trench as there was a definite dip in the ground.

Trench BBB:

This trench contained a ditch with the clay sides. The sides of ditches are sometimes lined with flints to stop them collapsing in. In addition to exposing the ditch profile at one end and due to lack of time we created a sondage at the other end. This is a narrow deep cut within the overall trench to show the size and shape and layers of the ditch i.e. its stratigraphy.

Trench EEE:

This trench was elongated to capture a number of geophysical features. The nearest round pit had been used for an operation involving burning as the inside was blackened. It could be an oven or possibly a kiln. Further along there was evidence of a wall and a floor surface. We discovered a fairly large section of a quern stone set in the side of the trench.

Trench DDD:

This trench was an exploratory trench 2m square near to Trench BBB but centred on a definite dip in the ground. In the topsoil we found pottery and pieces of building material, so it looked promising. As we dug further down we found a number of different coloured surfaces. There were areas of yellow clay in the corners and a dark central area. The darker material was likely to be a ditch fill. We excavated the dark area which increased in size and more pottery sherds were found. As the trench was dug at the end of the dig we decided that we would continue it in our next visit to the site.

Petersfield Big Dig - July

Historical Background:

Petersfield is similar to Alton being a medieval market town. There is no specific evidence of having a Romano British basis but in the village of Stroud, which is close by, there is a large Romano British villa which was discovered in the early 20th century by a schoolmaster from Bedale's School. He excavated it using the boys from the school. The likelihood is that there is a Roman road in the vicinity. One of the reasons for undertaking the Big Dig was to dig test pits in the back gardens of houses in the oldest part of Petersfield. The areas chosen were around the church and a location called 'The Spain' - a triangular green surrounded by a number of old timber framed houses. 'The Spain' has a history of being a market location. Our thoughts were to discover, through finds, the extent of Petersfield's medieval heritage and potentially go back further into its origins. In the area around Petersfield, near the lake, there have been a number of excavations, centring on the Bronze Age barrows on The Heath which located prehistoric remains.

The Dig:

We have undertaken Big Digs in previous years at Stroud and Alton and due to circumstances chose Petersfield for the British Archaeology fortnight in July. Our vice Chairman Peter and our Education Officer Ann both live in Petersfield and have a strong historical link with the town. Ann is Chairman of the Petersfield Historical Society and both Peter and Ann are also involved in the Petersfield Archaeological Society. It was the Petersfield History Society's 50th Anniversary in 2023 so it seemed an ideal time for a Petersfield 'Big Dig' hosted and run by the PHS and Liss Archaeology.

We decided to split the dig into two parts. The first was to have a publicly visible number of excavations which were to be held on a small council playing field, off 'The Avenue', within a reasonable distance of the Town Centre. With the Town Council's approval we surveyed the field and chose three locations that looked of interest. We arranged to dig each of the locations on three successive weekends during the Big Dig period. The second part was to dig in back gardens. The Historical Society had canvassed the areas we were interested in and had agreed with a number of house owners that we could dig test pits in their gardens.

More detailed information was given about the Big Dig during Peter's talk after the AGM.

Colemore - September

We returned to Colemore and went back to three of the trenches we had excavated before. The largest one (BBB), that we had covered with plastic sheeting in May, we wanted to dig out the remainder of the ditch we had exposed. The elongated trench (EEE) we decided to dig a parallel trench alongside to see how far the structure we had discovered extended. The small test pit (DDD) that seemed promising we opened up into a 4–5metre square trench.

Trench BBB:

We continued our excavation of trench BBB removing the majority of the ditch fill. We found an assortment of finds, as we progressed, including metal items amongst them a key and part of a knife or cutting tool, a gaming counter, a fairly large amount of our local Alice Holt pottery and odd pieces of construction building material including a piece of box flue tile.

Trench EEE:

We also continued with trench EEE alongside the section we dug in May. There was a continuation of the wall we found and also one running along the trench. A small ditch was also located alongside the wall, and we followed this to the end of the trench making a cut across the trench to see its profile. We found a number of interesting items in the trench including an Oxfordshire ware flagon top - 3rd to 4th century, a Roman commemorative coin, one side showing the story of Romulus and Remus and the wolf - 300-345 AD, two sections of a quern stone used for grinding wheat or corn and a copper alloy brooch either Hod Hill type or Aucissa type - 1st Century.

Trench DDD:

This was an enlargement of the 2m square test pit we dug in May. It was enlarged to a 4-5 metre square and was 1.2 – 1.5 metres deep. The trench revealed a typical 'V' shaped prehistoric Iron Age ditch. The two distinct ditch profiles shown are to the west and east baulks of the trench. Starting with a grey topsoil layer and progressing to a black fill then another grey fill and finally a lower clay layer. The ditch was lined with flints, similar to trench BBB, to stop the sides collapsing. The ditch held an interesting assortment of finds. As well as the Alice Holt grey ware pottery, which was the main volume found, we had Oxfordshire mortaria shards in two different colours - 3rd century, Oxfordshire parchment ware rim of a bowl, a base of a Samian ware vessel - 1st to 2nd century, a section of rim - Central Gaulish black slip ware and unusually some shards of Lyon ware.

Chairman's Report

Plans for 2024:

- A Colemore dig from 27 April to 26 May, for which bookings are already open.
- A second Petersfield Big Dig in the last two weeks of July.
- Ongoing work with the National Trust at Ludshott Common, subject to the usual restrictions because of ground-nesting birds.
- Further work at a farm near Stroud dependent on availability of areas of interest.
- Several geophysics projects – including Petersfield, Hawkley churchyard, a farm in the Alton area and possibly the Butser Hill Car Park for the South Downs National Park Authority.

Fundraising:

- We received sufficient funding to purchase the Bartington Magnetometer last year and it has been put to good use surveying areas of the National Trust Hinton Ampner Estate.
- It has proved to be an effective time saving means of surveying large areas prior to more detailed surveys using resistivity.
- We thank all those who have provided funding to make this purchase achievable.

Membership

Membership for last year - ending March 2024 – 159 members.

New members this year – 36.

6. Treasurer's report

Jane Godden, the Treasurer presented the accounts to end December 2023

After the purchase of the Emlid and Magnetometer last year the available funds are starting to increase again. Petersfield Big Dig raised funds as members paid to dig but the running costs were quite low. Insurance has increased by £40 to cover the Magnetometer. There is an estimate of future expenditure in the notes section which includes a replacement marquee and report fees.

The accounts have been audited and meet examination requirements. Approval of the accounts was proposed by Juliet Smith and seconded by David Quick.

7. Election of the committee officers

Our current committee officers are:

Chairman – Keith Baker
Vice chairman – Peter Price
Archaeology director – Juliet Smith
Treasurer – Jane Godden
Membership secretary – Carol Hartzenberg
Secretary – Jane Walker
Schools and education officer – Ann Brookes

All officers had agreed to continue in post and were proposed by Andy Vogel and seconded by Helen Mullenger.

8. Any other business

There was information given about the proposed purchase of a portable defibrillator to use on site and of a First Aid Course to be held at the Triangle Centre. There are 12 available places – member to contact the committee if they wish to participate.

There was no other business but David Quick thanked the committee for all their hard work in organising the activities.

Peter Price then gave a presentation about the Petersfield Big Dig.