

Overview of the Petersfield Big Dig 2026

As we will not be having a study session this year, here is an overview of the plans that have been put in place for this year's dig.

Our public engagement site will again be on High Meadow, next to the Swan Surgery. When we dug here last year we were not expecting to find very much, so were extremely surprised to uncover a considerable amount of pottery and building material, most of which predated 1800, and some of which predated 1500. This indicates that there was probably a house or houses here in the past; we will be aiming to find further evidence of such structures this year by placing our first trench close to last year's HM1, where we found a post hole. As we will be based at High Meadow for the duration of the Big Dig, we plan to open a second trench during the second week.

We also have permission to dig in the grounds of Goodyers in The Spain for the whole 2 week period. This is a very interesting site – a previous dig revealed the remains of buildings beneath the lawn and recent geophysics has confirmed the presence of some potentially intriguing features.

In addition, we will be returning to Hardy House, where we opened trenches in 2023 and 2024. A huge range of pottery has been found on this site, much of it dating to the pre 1500 period. We have also found a garden feature and items potentially relating to one of Hardy House's most colourful characters, Sam Hardy.

It is also planned to dig test pits in two gardens in Borough Hill. This area appears to have been settled in the 18th century, if not before, and has quite a complicated history. It is also very close to High Meadow where we identified an ancient trackway last year.

Finally, we have permission to dig test pits in two gardens accessed from Heath Road. In both cases the land is connected to the Shackleford Cross family and Worcester House. One of the sites was once part of the associated formal gardens which existed during the 18th and 19th centuries.