

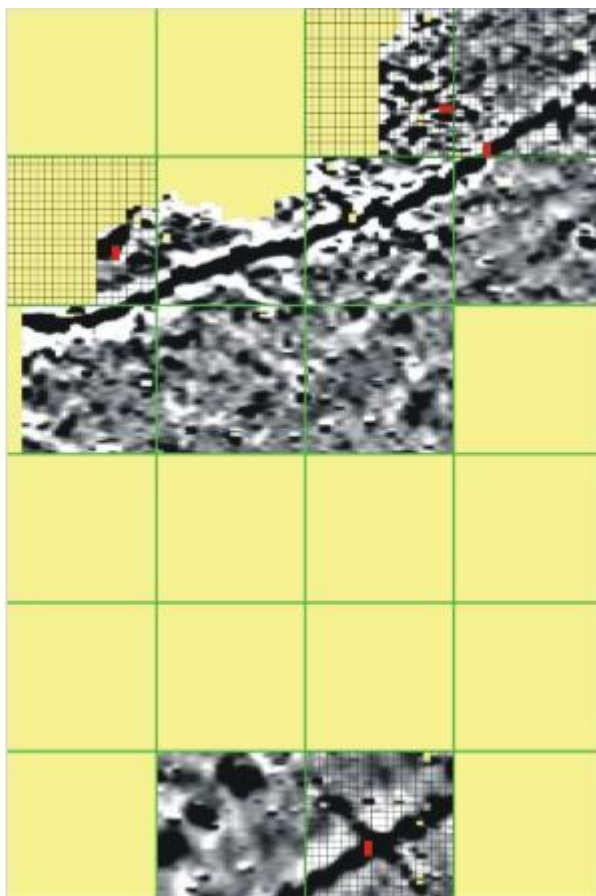
## Down on the Farm – January 2016

Well hello there! Now that the festivities are done and we've an eye to the coming year, here's your monthly update on current fieldwork. So basically this is what we're doing:

The Park excavation is still on-going, though we've been interrupted by weather and water table rising. TP3 is now finished (and waterlogged - proving the ditch still works!). It appears to be pre-Roman, going out of use in the Roman period, large Roman sherds of black burnished ware found only in the top/later fills of the ditch. It may also have been lined with a rich red clay at some point, though this has still to be proved. The ditch also yielded a small deposit of large bones, yet to be positively identified they appear to be of human origin. TP1 is likely to be extended by 1m west initially then possibly another metre north. This TP is positioned on the bottom left hand corner of the 'lozenge' shaped feature that runs under the hedge. We've still not found any datable material yet which is why we've decided to extend further into the feature. We also decided to postpone work on TP4 as its location is very near the water course that runs east along the field. Our longer term aim is to return to the field, and 'Barkers' field over the hedge at different times over the course of the year. We are continuing to work out at Park at weekends, either Saturdays OR Sundays.



*Image of field 1 at Park (with TP locations)*



We've provisionally agreed a programme of work at Tithe Mead for 2016. We aim to open two smaller areas this season, one being the midden which we located last summer (Area 1B) the other being the dryer building which discovered and partially excavated in 2014. The aim is to get a better and fuller understanding of these features and how they relate to the other features identified in the field. This will mean a slightly different plan of excavation field work, though the work load and potential for generating artefacts/materials mean that this is likely to take a considerable amount of

time effort so ALL offers of help with this next exciting phase of Tithe Mead will be greatly welcomed. Our main focus of work will be to complete the geophysics of the wider landscape. This means at least another three, fairly large fields to the north and east of Tithe Mead. This really is a piece of work so your help and support with this element of the project will be vital.

We will resume the post-ex finds processing at the farm commencing the Tuesday January 5<sup>th</sup> 2016. If anybody is willing to come along, I/we will also make a weekend day available for this work, down at the unit; however our time is heavily committed (see above) so please be sure if you would like to volunteer. PLEASE keep your eyes to the newsletter for further information.

### **Other Geophysics projects**

The New Year means we will also be returning to the villa field at Lufton to complete the most westerly area of the geophysical survey area in preparation for James, Andy and the Newcastle crew on their summer visit.

We will also be returning to Sandford Orcas and finishing off the last of the surveys requested by Giles and Christopher as part of their village project. We've also completed an initial survey out at Penselwood. Results are good and there appear to be features in the field immediately north/east of the notorious pen-pits field. We are in contact with members of the local history group and we are likely to be doing further work with them this year. For more info on Penselwood in general see this link <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/som/vol7/pp184-192>

We have agreed, in principle, to survey a field, or part thereof, at Wincanton. Two very friendly, very enthusiastic detectorists have shown us a site which they've been detecting on, that has a series of dark patches spread over the field, numerous metal finds (mainly Roman) and a variety of worked flints. This field is HUGE, so we intend to survey an area within the field initially and then assess the results before going further. We are also scheduled to continue surveying at Great Ground and at Misterton, both are subject to access being agreed so we'll keep you posted.



That's it...for now. Have a splendid New Year all of ya. Once again I would personally like to thank all members who have contributed, in oh so many ways(!), over the previous year and we look forward to continued help and support throughout the next year.  
Love Reign on-Jah The Ranch hand!

*(Portrait: spotted by Elaine in early December, Nigel aka the Ranch Hand, celebrating a notable anniversary)*

### **Down on the Farm in February 2016**

Fieldwork is on-going at Park with one remaining test pit to complete (TP1). TP 3 is now backfilled and can be turfed over once the post-ex 'admin' is complete. More on this at a later date, though we can say that the ditch identified in TP3 silted up in the Roman period. The test pit was filled with water, the top of the bank associated with the ditch the only bit above water! We aim to extend TP1 by 1 metre north and a metre west, which should put in the ditch which appears as large oblong feature running NW by SE on the geophysics (see previous newsletters). Hopefully this will yield some dateable material as we've absolutely nothing so far. That's archaeology, I hear you say.

We've also started back out at Misterton. We are at the final stage of a large landscape geophysical survey covering 3 fields, one north and 2 south of the train track to the east of Crewkerne station (see below).



This is the area covered so far with some resi also completed and a series of test pits, the most recent being of the enclosure (bottom left in field 1 north of the track). This has been a long term project and final completion will be a helluvan achievement, in SO many ways!

Big shout to everyone who's been involved over the years, nearly there. On completion of the survey, a more detailed article about the site and our rollercoaster association with it will be in the article. Woo!

Pending projects include completing the final stage of the geophysics at Sandford Orcas on behalf of Giles, Christopher and the history group there. Here's a plot of the field below, for your info, should you be curious as to what it's all about.



Come and get involved, this work is likely to take place Tuesday/Thursday however if you're up for it but can only do weekends then this may be arranged if possible. This applies to all SSARG active field projects.

We have reached what we hope to be the final stages of finds processing of the artefacts from Tithe Mead, with just the bone to clean and the pottery to be quantified in preparation for further analysis. Thanks to the toothbrush crew for all their efforts on wet Thursdays in January. Next task will be to process the bulk enviro soil samples so come and wash some soil and see what comes up ?!

Finally I would like to share a photo of the award-winning *SSARG Hearts & Mind* team, recently spotted visiting the new exhibition space at Dorchester Museum. We were there to look at the lunar at the centre of the joint project we were involved with last year. The lunar is in the cabinet just below the trophy bowl being well held by Digger Bri.





## On the Ranch in March 2016

Short month, short dispatch.....Tithe mead post-ex processing of finds is now complete and the material is now ready for assessment in preparation for specialist attention. Thank you to Peter W, Neil, Liz, Dorothy, Flora Chris and Anita. The next stage of the post-ex is processing the bulk environmental (soil) samples. This will also be done at the unit at Sutton Montis. If anyone would like to get involved with this interesting and sometimes highly rewarding procedure then get in touch with us and we will happily show you how it's done and, importantly, why it's done.



*Flotation Tank*



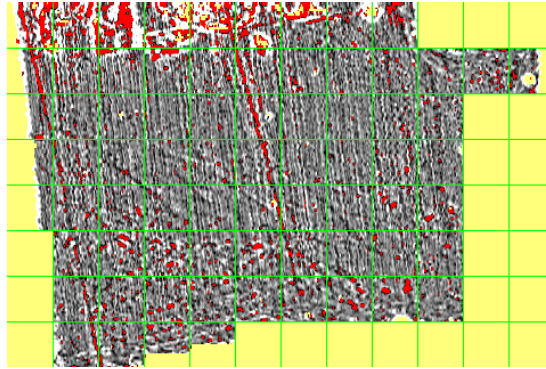
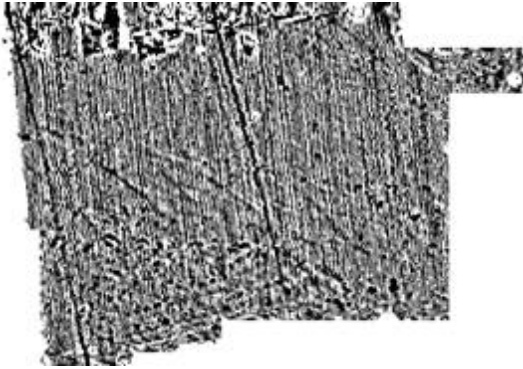
*Residues from soil samples Glastonbury Abbots kitchen*

Excavation fieldwork at Tithe Mead will focus on the dryer building (TP 2 2014) and on the midden which we found last year. The season will run from June 1st 2016 initially on Tuesdays, Thursdays and weekends (where possible, subject to numbers). We will then do two full weeks Monday – Friday AND weekends at the beginning of July. We aim to finish the majority of the work by August.

All plans are provisional and will be finalised once we've met with James, Margaret and Richard Yandle to be sure they are happy with what we are proposing to do. We will also be attempting to complete the geophysics on the fields immediately north and east of Tithe Mead to hopefully get a better idea of how Tithe Mead fits into the wider landscape around Stapleton/Martock/ Muchelney. I would also recommend taking a look at the LIDAR images of the area which is as, if not more, illuminating than the geophysics. Google LIDAR and go to the Environmental Agency website who guide you through the procedure (I was able to follow it so.....!). A huge thanks to Dave Taylor of the Martock History Group for all the research he's done on this.

We have finally completed the geophysics at Misterton (preliminary graphic below). The next stage is to round up and collect all the results and squeeze them into a standalone report. This is an excellent piece of work by SSARG and a HUGE thank you to everybody involved over the years, to Mike Charles (Ski) for keeping the site active and to the land owners for the (continued) access to the site. Very little has been reported about Crewkerne and Misterton in the pre-historic, Roman and late Roman periods; this work will hopefully help redress this. Our next stage is to consider a series of small targeted evaluation trenches as two of the fields are arable and intensively farmed and the amount of surface finds suggest a shallow top soil, with the plough dragging up bedrock.

Thanks to Brian for helping complete the last 30+ grids this week which meant I wasn't trying to survey on my own! All these projects take a lot of time and effort and the more people involved in helping getting it all done, the less time it takes, freeing us up for other (your!) satellite projects we're asked to be involved with. Remember this! Keep them eyes peeled for further info in your newsletter.



Graphic showing results from field 3 (south of the train track. Red indicates thermo-remnant materials. North to top of page.



We're provisionally booked to survey Highmore Hill (near Milborne Port) on behalf of Jim Hart & Barry Lane (see previous newsletters) who are hoping to locate the site of a beacon which is marked as being there on historic maps of the estate.

We are currently awaiting for the relevant permissions regarding Penselwood (see previous newsletters) and will report back with dates of our survey of the 'Pen pits' field in a later edition. The survey work at Wincanton will now be done later in the year. The crop that has been planted will be harvested July or

August. We will also be out at Sandford Orcas this month to complete our survey work there with Giles and Christopher. We appear to have lost our baseline, so are going to have to start from scratch - any help will be greatly appreciated.

### Down on the Ranch in April

Here we go...this month we've completed all survey work out at Misterton, with a week to spare before the land was cultivated and planted with barley. The composite graphic (right) shows the extent of the site, covering (at least) three large fields straddling the railway line. True to archaeology, initial thoughts suggest that the train track was driven right through a substantial multi-phase site.



A geophysical report on our findings will follow in due course and, at this stage, we're 'resting' this site until further notice. Mr. Charles (Ski) will continue to detect the site, submit his finds to PAS and monitor the site whilst we scratch our chins and think about (any) the next stage of our investigations. There are approximately 400 finds from the site already uploaded onto the PAS website if you're interested. Go to <http://www.somersetroutes.co.uk>.

*The complete Misterton survey. North to the top.*

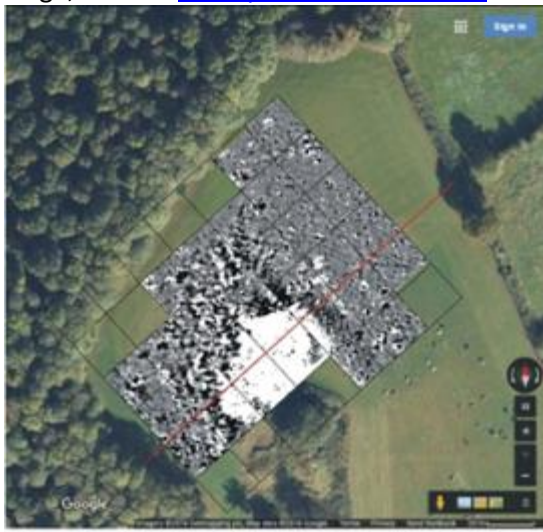
Incidentally you can also view finds submitted by our member, Greg Wales who is detecting at Bower Hinton (this site is also on the Somerset HER database). We will hopefully be returning to this site to consider some survey work in the autumn.

<https://finds.org.uk/database/search/results/finderID/PAS4FBF97A400153A/county/Somerset/page/1/show/100>



We have also completed the survey with Jim and Barry at Highmore Hill near Milborne Port (see left). The initial results do show anomalies there, but at this stage nothing else definitive can be said. The results shown below, particularly the gradiometry results are highly compromised by the huge magnetic reading shown as a big white area. We are led to believe that the hill as well as being the potential site of a beacon, has also been utilised as the site of a farm modern midden (a dump for farm scrap). This has major implications for any further work and our ability to analyse the results effectively. We will be contacting the Milborne Port local history group to share any information gained by the survey once we've pulled the info/data together into some sort of short report.

Further information will be made available at a later date, if you want to know more then at this stage, contact [harveytron@hotmail.com](mailto:harveytron@hotmail.com)



*Gradiometry results*

We're still out at Park trying to finish off TP1 which was targeted on the bottom left hand corner of the 'lozenge' shape anomaly which straddles the hedge line between the two fields. We have clipped the feature with our test pit, but we've no dating materials AT ALL. So, with the land owner's agreement, we will extend the test pit, hopefully taking us into the ditch and able to retrieve something we can put a date to.

We will be putting up a display about our work at Tithe Mead at the Market House TIC in Martock from 29<sup>th</sup> March and it will be there for a number of weeks.



We are meeting up with the group from Penselwood on April 6<sup>th</sup> to plan our involvement in the survey in the Pen pits field (see below). There really is a wealth of information already available via the Somerset HER ([www.heritagegateway.org.uk](http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk)) if you are interested in being involved.



*The area marked by red partially surveyed; area marked in blue is target survey area. North to top.*  
We aim to completely survey the 'blue' area with the help and input from the Penselwood group but if you want to come to be involved then contact me.

We also aim to finish our current work at Sandford Orcas this month, subject to availability of the field in question (see previous newsletters). We look forward to meeting with Martock Group on 26<sup>th</sup> April and the Tintinhull Group on the 27<sup>th</sup> April where we will be giving an talk/update on the work at Tithe Mead. Other than that it's quiet!!! Enjoy the long days and, hopefully some sunshine.

### **On the Ranch in May**

This month, which has flown by, we've been largely concentrating our efforts on completing the survey work on behalf of Giles Cooper out at Sandford Orcas. We've surveyed approximately 3/5<sup>ths</sup> of the field and hope to finish within the next week. Preliminary results look good with a variety of possible features already showing up (with the usual metallic interference, buried tractor?!). We've already identified and confirmed the location of two ponds in the field, subsequently filled in and may also have identified a Saxon period dyke which is shown on a 1928 edition of the Ordnance Survey.



Meanwhile, post excavation analysis of Tithe Mead finds and preparation for this year continue at the farm, where we will also be running a programme of flotation to look at the soil samples taken from the 'dryer' at Tithe Mead (TP2 2014, image to the left).



The aim of this is to try and establish what materials were being dried. If you're interested then please get in touch and we'll get doing some soil processing.

We've also done our talks/feedback sessions with both Martock and Tintinhull groups, and we've installed a display/exhibit at the Market House in Martock if you're passing by.

Final preparations are taking place with regard to our excavation at Tithe Mead. Thank you for your help and support. If you want to be involved with some, any

or all of our activities then contact us on [www.ssarg.org.uk](http://www.ssarg.org.uk) .

### On the Ranch in July

It's that time of year and we're focussing our main energies out at Tithe Mead once again. This year, we've returned to the midden which we first looked at in 2015 (TP 1B). We've opened up a trench 18m x 6m, in the area between the two large ditches excavated last year. After taking out the plough soil, lots of it, we've come down onto a large amount of stone. Large blue lias slabs, roughly pitched lias blocks and a large amount of heat damaged Ham stone. All the evidence so far suggests that the midden is only one feature along the remains of another stone built structure.



*Tithe Mead TP 1. Cleaning around the stone; 'midden' area*

Other artefacts recovered include a wide range of Roman pottery comparable with last year's excavations, more plate glass fragments and a lovely quern stone. Work continues and progress is being made. Thank you all who've been out and helped with the project: good work. We look forward to seeing you and joining us for some potentially interesting archaeology.





Volunteers Janet Shorey and Ben Caile (bottom left



Nice varied finds tray from the ploughsoil, above right.



Shots of happy diggers, the usual suspects above left and students from Strode with Andy Pickering, above right.



In other news, Sean, with able help of Nessie, Simon Games-Thomas and Liz completed his test pits at Huntsham earlier this month. All went well and a short report back by Sean will follow. It appears that very little is left of the old manor building and that it was located further away from the church than previously believed (see previous newsletters). A big thanks to Nessie and Liz for help and guidance throughout.



TP 2 Huntsham showing cut into natural



TP2 Huntsham. Gently extracting building material

We will be initiating work at Wincanton and Penselwood towards the end of July, both are geophysics but any help would be very much appreciated. If you do want to be involved then contact either [Liz.caldwell@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:Liz.caldwell@hotmail.co.uk) / [harveytron@hotmail.com](mailto:harveytron@hotmail.com) for the lowdown.

The next stage of the telephone box renovations is scheduled to begin on 23<sup>rd</sup> July when we'll be cleaning off, last brisk rubdown and then prepped up for the undercoating. We're looking for 4 – 6 people for a day's worth of gentle rubbing and the application of strategic masking tape! Who ya gonna call?! Oh and don't forget, we are doing some geophysics at Montacute House on the 30<sup>th</sup> July, as part of the CBA Festival of Archaeology, complete with a stand and information for visitors.

Enjoy the summer and we hope to see you all at some point at one or any of the many events or projects being currently undertaken. And we've still the static display at the Market House Martock!

**Nigel Harvey**