

THE DORSET DIGGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE DORSET DIGGERS COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY GROUP

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Roman Fortlet

Hayley has been brilliant at arranging for us to survey the Blackdown fortlet . Vaughan and I went to check it out back in March and it looked like this:



Last month it was completely overgrown with bracken but thanks to ranger Russell's chainsaw, Dave from EUCAN with a brushcutter, Jill Hearing, James and Hayley with rakes and pitchforks, we had a clear site for our survey on 6th August. The first task was to lay out a grid of 10m squares.

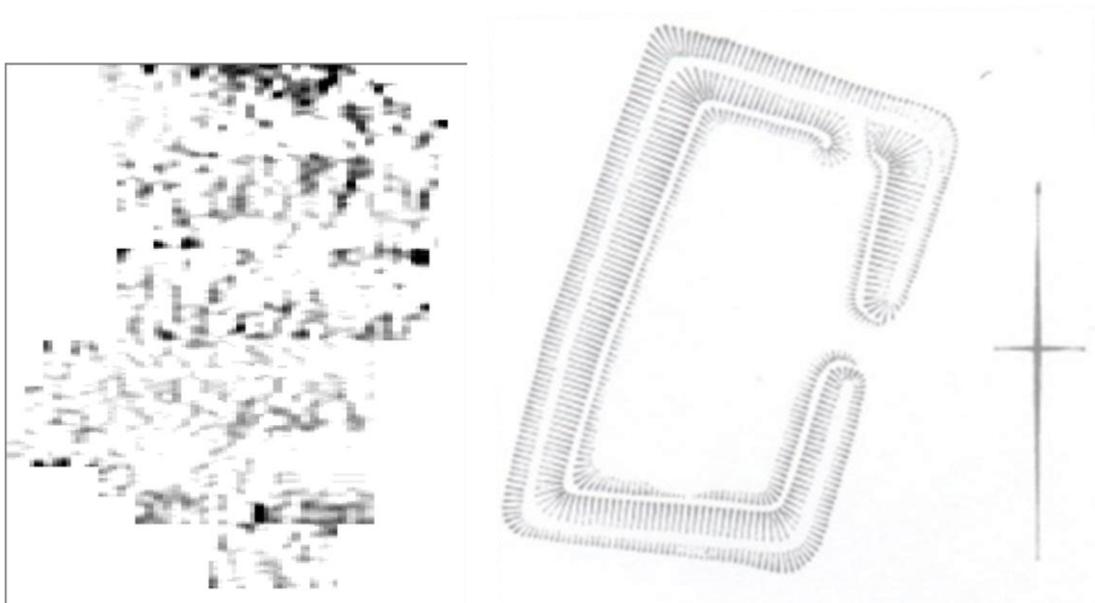


Magnetometry

We were able to borrow a gradiometer from Bournemouth University – thanks to Hayley, Kate Welham from BU and Lawrence from the New Forest National Park. It works the same as the “rugby posts” we used with GeoFlo but is an older model with just a single pole. We stripped off all metal buckles, zips etc and replaced our metal poles with plastic pegs. We also had to switch off our phones and make sure the metal ends of the tapes were not near the machine. Then we tried to walk steadily and smoothly in straight lines, which was rather difficult when we came to the ditches.



After two long days we had traversed as much as was clear of vegetation. Vaughan made careful notes throughout so that back home he could instruct the computer to put each square in the right place. Here is the result alongside the plan from the national monument commission.



Black indicates ditches like the boundary ditch at the top, so the other dark patches may mark the trenches from 1970

Resistivity

We left our little grid markers so that we could return the following week with our old friend the zimmer frame. New member Alice came along to help. The ground was so dry that it was hard to push the probes into the earth and readings went off the scale at times. The whole site was completed in a (tiring) day and downloaded onto the computer. On this image the pale areas are dry ground possibly with buried stone. The ramparts come out clearly though they are only a few cm high. It is worth stopping for a look if you are nearby. It is on the Martinstown to Portesham road at the turn for Little Bredy.



Bill Putnam thought it was a Roman signalling station and did some experiments with bonfires to check whether it could be seen from known Roman military sites. Richard Hood went to the end of the roman road on Eggardon and found he could see both Waddon Hill (where a Roman camp was excavated) and Hardy's monument which is close to the fortlet at Blackdown.

Other Events

Archaeology walks:

13th Sept Lyscombe Bottom with Claire Pinder. Meet at 10.30am at the grass parking area just off the Piddletrenthide to Cheselbourne road at the entrance to Lyscombe Farm (DT2 7RF, grid reference ST 733 005).

17th Sept Medieval Portland with Alan Hunt. Meet at 10.30am at Portland Museum.

Lecture

7th Oct Anglo-saxon and medieval jewellery – Dorchester Museum