

The 'Dig' outside the Barn, Abbey Fields, 24th July 2005

Irene Potter

English Heritage and Warwick D.C. gave permission for this 'Dig' to go ahead to coincide with the end of National Archaeology Week on the 24th July.

Six KHAS members, Harry Sunley, Irene Potter, Keith Croucher, Margaret Kane, Rob Steward and Richard Gillard, met at the Barn, along with Cyril Hobbins and his metal detector to lend a hand . The 'Dig' was supervised by Jonathan Parkhouse, Warwickshire County Archæologist.

The site had already been tested with Cyril's detector some time earlier, when he and Harry investigated an area along a 3m wide strip against the south face of the building, resulting in a high number of both ferrous and non-ferrous signals.

Our first step was for Cyril to resurvey with his detector and tag the places of signal activity. The next was to enclose the area with the most signals with a line to outline the best place to dig. This had to be a 2m by 1m square set out at right angles to the south face of the building to the west of the door. At this point it began to rain steadily and although Harry's gazebo kept the worst off our backs, there was a constant drip down our necks.

After doing that, which took some time, we could begin the actual excavation by cutting and removing the turf, one piece at a time, so that Cyril could go over it with the detector and one of us could search the soil for any object giving a signal. This way several bottle top, ring pulls from cans and various small pieces of tinfoil were recovered. While this was going on others stacked the turf neatly, earth to earth and grass to grass. The next step was once again to let the detector go over the exposed soil and find any signals, then mark them so that those digging could be careful near the markers. The first to have a go were Margaret, Richard and Keith - a tight squeeze in such a small space. Three coins were so far recovered and a lot of nails, left from the re-tiling of the Barn in 1972. Finds were recorded and numbered by Irene, sitting in the Barn doorway to avoid the rain, while Rob assisted Jonathan with the recording of measurements.

After an hour or so and a lot more nails, but nothing else, there was a change of diggers and Harry, Irene and Cyril Had a go. Unfortunately nothing other than broken Victorian pottery and bits of broken glass were unearthed. As it was by now pouring with rain and we were all soaking wet (not to mention the mud), Jonathan decided to make a quicker finish by halving the area of the dig to the top half. Nothing further of interest was found here, and once some large areas of stone flagging, seemingly a level, appeared, it was decided to call a halt. The last job was to fill the hole with the spoil and relay the turf as neatly as possible, so that the grass could recover. A good time was had by all despite being wet through and covered with mud, so we all headed home for a hot bath.

Thank you to the four volunteers who turned out to man the Barn on this occasion and had only six visitors to entertain, also members of the Society who came down to see how we were getting on, not to mention Norman and Ve Stevens who held umbrellas over the diggers while getting very wet themselves.