

**SAFEFIELD FARM, ALCONBURY WESTON 2025
EVALUATION EXCAVATION
SITE DIARY DAYS 1-6 - 25-30 SEP 25**

Site Details

Event number: ECB7612

Site Reference Code: SFF192-25

Site Benchmark (SBM):

Description - NE corner of footbridge

Lat and Long - 52°23'11.00"N 0°14'43.00"W

NGR - TL 19519 77933

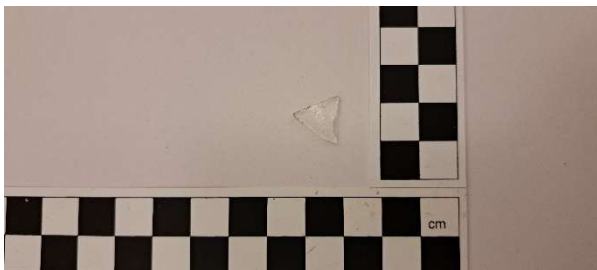
AMSL - 48m (Ordnance Survey - Ordnance Datum Newlyn (ODN))



End of Day 6 looking north



End of Day 6 looking south



Small Finds assemblage - clear glass sherd and coin





Small Finds assemblage - coin and copper flake



Small Finds assemblage - glass vessel sherd



Small Finds assemblage - iron rod

Aims and Objectives

Project: Continued investigation in order to identify revealed and any additional building features and determine the evolving nature of settlement activity. Additionally, to locate and determine the nature of the Roman/Romano-British pottery and metal objects assemblage discovered by Landowners Historical Research Group (LHRG) detectorists.

Season: 3

Trenches: 1 & 2

Test-Pit: 2

Site Orientation

Trench 1 is located 52m west of the SBM and 10m south of the drainage ditch at the north edge of Hermitage Wood on Safefield Farm and is aligned longitudinally E/W.

Trench 2 is located at the north edge of Hermitage Wood on Safefield Farm, 9.1m east of Trench 1, and is aligned longitudinally E/W.

Test-pit 2 is located in the north edge of Hermitage Wood on Safefield Farm, 8.5m east of Trench 2, and is aligned E/W by N/S.

Activity

Day 1 - 25 Sep 25

Morning:

At the start of the morning session the weather was sunny with scattered cloud and occasional light breeze, the ground conditions were dry and the forecast temperature was 12°C forecast.

Trench 1 - the first task was to clear leaves from the trench and scrape back the trench floor and sides to get a clear view of the contexts [1002], [1003] and [1004] and features as left from the previous session; although there was a general distinction between features and contexts, there were no defined edges or transitions between them, the diffuse nature of which was confused by the dappling effect of sunlight through the tree canopy; however, as the excavation progressed, areas of natural geology were determined which helped clarify the remaining contexts and features.

Trench 2 - no activity was undertaken in this trench.

Test-Pit 2 - no activity was undertaken in this test-pit.

Afternoon:

At the start of the afternoon session the weather was sunny with scattered cloud and occasional light breeze, the ground conditions were dry and the forecast temperature was 16°C forecast.

Trench 1 - excavation continued across the entirety of the trench which led to greater clarity of the remaining contexts and features; context [1002] was fully removed revealing natural geology, whilst context [1003] was considered complete - with a residual area appearing as a fill within the surrounding natural geology that was revealed throughout the remainder of the trench; context [1004] continued to remain visible as a cut and fill within the adjacent natural geology. Although the areas identified as natural geology varied in colour from pale yellow-brown to pale grey-yellow they shared the same firm, friable characteristics with very small flint/chert inclusions to be considered the same; the grey-yellow surfaces being considered a discolouration of the natural pale yellow-brown.

Trench 2 - no activity was undertaken in this trench.

Test-Pit 2 - no activity was undertaken in this test-pit.

Finds:

Trench 1 - a varied assemblage, very similar to those of previous sessions, consisted of various pot sherds, slag, bone, teeth, oyster and muscle shell, iron objects and charcoal.

Notes:

Context [1002] is a firm, friable mid-yellow-brown soil, likely to be woodland soil accumulation against the west slope of the medieval ridge-and-furrow ridge the trench has been cut into.

Context [1003] is a firm, friable dark grey-brown soil with sporadic dense charcoal inclusions.

Context [1004] consists of collapsed lumps of compact, granular and friable yellow-brown mortar with very small white shell inclusions, interspersed with thin bands of dark brown soil leached in from context [1003].

Options:

None

Day 2 - 26 Sep 25

Morning:

At the start of the morning session the weather was overcast with occasional sunny intervals and occasional very light breeze, the ground conditions were dry and the forecast temperature was 14°C forecast.

Trench 1 - robust trowelling confirmed the grey-yellow was indeed discolouration of the natural geology caused by the overlaying dark grey-brown soils of context [1003], the residual area of which was deemed to be a different context for stratigraphic purposes; the robust trowelling also clarified more edges between contexts and features greater definition throughout, this was further enhanced with the day being overcast which gave an even light across the trench floor.

Trench 2 - no activity was undertaken in this trench.

Test-Pit 2 - no activity was undertaken in this test-pit.

Afternoon:

At the start of the afternoon session the weather was overcast with occasional sunny intervals and occasional very light breeze, the ground conditions were dry and the forecast temperature was 16°C forecast.

Trench 1 - excavation concentrated on the residual dark grey-brown feature to determine whether it was a fill, and to identify associated cuts, or thin layer in a shallow naturally occurring depression, and a collection of small circular features to determine whether they were pole holes or rodent holes.

Trench 2 - no activity was undertaken in this trench.

Test-Pit 2 - no activity was undertaken in this test-pit.

Finds:

Trench 1 - the assemblage for the day once again consisted of various pot sherds, bones, ceramic building materials, iron nails, and oyster shell; additionally, it included a small sherd of clear thin glass and two low denomination copper alloy coins; with small finds consisting of glass sherd and two small coins.

Notes:

The various features now clearly defined needed to be designated and recorded in the site register as the first course of action in the morning of Day 3.

The small find glass sherd is very thin, and clear.

The small find coins are copper alloy with some visible detail.

Options:

None

Day 3 - 27 Sep 25**Morning:**

At the start of the morning session the weather was broken cloud with sunny intervals and occasional light breeze, the ground conditions were dry and the forecast temperature was 13°C forecast.

Trench 1 - the first course of action was to designate the various contexts and features that were now defined - context [1005], fill (1006) with no defined cut, cut [1007] and fill (1008), context [1009], context [1010], context [1011], context [1012], fill (1013) with no defined cut, context [1014], context [1015], context [1016], context [1017], cut [1018] and fill (1019), cut [1020] and fill (1021), cut [1022] and fill (1023), and cut [1024] and fill (1025), whilst some edges were clearly defined other transitions were less so; the large central feature (1006) gave the appearance of being a fill without any defined edges between several bordering contexts which produced a good variety of finds similar in nature to previous assemblages; having designated the contexts and features, excavation concentrated on the removal of fills (1006) and (1013).

Trench 2 - no activity was undertaken in this trench.

Test-Pit 2 - no activity was undertaken in this test-pit.

Afternoon:

At the start of the afternoon session the weather was overcast with occasional light breeze, the ground conditions were dry and the forecast temperature was 17°C forecast.

Trench 1 - taking advantage of the good weather and ground conditions a measured sketch plan of the trench was drawn; the remainder of the afternoon concentrated on the continued excavation of fills (1006) and (1013).

Trench 2 - no activity was undertaken in this trench.

Test-Pit 2 - no activity was undertaken in this test-pit.

Finds:

Trench 1 - an interesting and varied assemblage of stunning pot sherds - that are extremely diagnostic, a couple of good sized iron nails - likely from a wooden structure; with small finds consisting of a lipped and curved glass sherd and a flake of copper.

Notes:

Context [1005] is a firm, friable pale yellow-brown clay with very small flint/chert inclusions, that is likely to be natural geology.

Fill (1006) is a firm, friable dark grey-brown soil with sporadic dense charcoal inclusions.

Cut [1007] is small and circular / Fill (1008) is a friable dark grey-brown soil with sporadic dense charcoal inclusions.

Context [1009] is a firm, mid yellow-brown clay.

Context [1010] is a firm, friable pale yellow-brown clay with very small flint/chert inclusions, that is likely to be natural geology.

Context [1011] is a firm, mid yellow-brown clay.

Context [1012] is a firm, mid yellow-brown clay.

Fill (1013) is a firm with plasticity grey clay, with mid yellow-brown streaks.

Context [1014] is a firm, friable grey-brown clay with very small flint/chert inclusions

Context [1015] is a firm, friable pale yellow-brown clay with very small flint/chert inclusions, that is likely to be natural geology.

Context [1016] is yellow-brown mortar.

Context [1017] is a firm, mid yellow-brown clay.

Cut [1018] is small and circular, and the associated fill (1019) is a friable dark grey-brown soil with sporadic dense charcoal inclusions.

Cut [1020] is small and circular, and the associated fill (1021) is a friable dark grey-brown soil with sporadic dense charcoal inclusions.

Cut [1022] is small and circular, and the associated fill (1023) is a friable dark grey-brown soil with sporadic dense charcoal inclusions.

Cut [1024] is small and circular, and the associated fill (1025) is a friable dark grey-brown soil with sporadic dense charcoal inclusions.

The glass small find is a very interesting lipped and curved glass sherd with an aqua hue.

The small find flake appears to be of copper due to the oxidised colouration.

Options:

None

Day 4 - 28 Sep 25

Morning:

At the start of the morning session the weather was overcast and still, followed by steady rain, the ground conditions were dry becoming wet and the forecast temperature was 12°C forecast.

Trench 1 - the morning started with continued excavation of fills (1006) and (1013), but after half an hour or so the rain that had begun shortly after excavating had commenced had worked its way through the tree canopy with an intensity that meant the trench had to be vacated - however, by this time the excavation of (1013) was completed; no further work was undertaken during the morning.

Trench 2 - no activity was undertaken in this trench.

Test-Pit 2 - no activity was undertaken in this test-pit.

Afternoon:

At the start of the afternoon session the weather was overcast and still, the ground conditions were damp and the forecast temperature was 15°C forecast.

Trench 1 - the rain ceased shortly into the afternoon, after a further hour to allow the trench to dry out enough to be reoccupied the afternoon settled down to become a good few hours of progressive excavation; excavation of fill (1006) continued, whilst excavation of pole hole fills (1019), (1021), (1023) and (1025) was begun - with the pole hole fills indicating the respective pole hole cuts were lined with a thin layer of mortar.

Trench 2 - no activity was undertaken in this trench.

Test-Pit 2 - no activity was undertaken in this test-pit.

Finds:

Trench 1 - the assemblage, whilst small due to the limited excavation time, was similar again to those of previous days; two of the pole holes each had a single pot sherd within their respective fills; with a small find consisting of an iron rod.

Notes:

Fill (1006) is a firm, friable dark grey-brown soil with sporadic dense charcoal inclusions.

Fill (1013) is a firm with plasticity grey clay, with mid yellow-brown steaks.

Fill (1019) is a friable dark grey-brown soil with sporadic dense charcoal inclusions.

Fill (1021) is a friable dark grey-brown soil with sporadic dense charcoal inclusions.

Fill (1023) is a friable dark grey-brown soil with sporadic dense charcoal inclusions.

Fill (1025) is a friable dark grey-brown soil with sporadic dense charcoal inclusions.

The small find iron rod is of particular interest as it appeared to have a relationship to an iron object recovered from the previous session that was recently identified as medieval door furniture.

Options:

None

Day 5 - 29 Sep 25

Morning:

At the start of the morning session the weather was clear with very light breeze, the ground conditions were damp and the forecast temperature was 11°C forecast.

Trench 1 - the morning start was delayed by half an hour in order to allow the trench floor to dry from overnight dampness; the first task, therefore, was to trowel the trench floor in order to give clarity lost to the overnight dampness - as there were no clear edges to fill (1006) and there was irregularity in the appearance of the underlying natural geology, the fill was redesignated as a context; context [1006] continued to be excavated.

Trench 2 - no activity was undertaken in this trench.

Test-Pit 2 - no activity was undertaken in this test-pit.

Afternoon:

At the start of the afternoon session the weather was cloudy with mild breeze, the ground conditions were dry and the forecast temperature was 16°C forecast.

Trench 1 - excavation of context [1006] was finally completed, revealing two new features - a north/south linear and a rectilinear, both with fills consisting of firm, friable dark grey-brown soil with sporadic dense charcoal inclusions.

Trench 2 - no activity was undertaken in this trench.

Test-Pit 2 - no activity was undertaken in this test-pit.

Finds:

Trench 1 - the final assemblage from context [1006] consisted of very good diagnostic pottery sherds and a number of good sized iron nails.

Notes:

Context [1006] is a firm, friable dark grey-brown soil with sporadic dense charcoal inclusions.

Options:

None

Day 6 - 30 Sep 25**Morning:**

At the start of the morning session the weather was scattered cloud and still, the ground conditions were slightly dew damp becoming dry and the forecast temperature was 13°C forecast.

Trench 1 - the first task was to designate the latest features to be revealed - the cut for fill (1013) was designated as [1026], whilst the two features revealed below context [1006] the previous day were designated as linear cut [1028] and fill (1027), and rectilinear cut [1030] and fill (1029); trench records were updated whilst excavation of fill (1027) was started.

Trench 2 - none

Test-Pit 2 - none

Afternoon:

At the start of the afternoon session the weather was scattered cloud and still, the ground conditions were dry and the forecast temperature was 18°C forecast.

Trench 1 - updating of trench records was completed and the excavation of fill (1029) was started but not quite completed by the end of the day; excavation of fill (1027) was completed by the close, revealing a very rough cut that included some pieces of modern looking concrete.

Trench 2 - none

Test-Pit 2 - none

Finds:

Trench 1 - a variety of Romano British pot sherds, various animal bones, iron items and muscle shell came out of both fills, along with the above mentioned concrete from fill (1027).

Notes:

Cut [1026] is a semi-circular shallow sloped pit, and the associated fill (1013) is a firm with plasticity grey clay, with mid yellow-brown steaks.

Cut [1028] is linear, shallow and rough, and the associated fill (1027) is a firm, friable dark grey-brown soil with sporadic dense charcoal inclusions.

Cut [1030] is a square(ish), shallow pit, and the associated fill (1029) is a firm, friable dark grey-brown soil with sporadic dense charcoal inclusions.

Options:

During the next session, complete the excavation of fill (1029), and drop a sondage across the width of the trench to test whether contexts [1012] and [1017] are deliberate clay surfaces and also to test the assumption that context [1016] is the mortar fill of a linear cut. During the next session, designate the multiple pole holes that were revealed during Day 6 and excavate their fills.

Resume the excavation of both Trench 2 and Test Pit 2.

Identify the optimum location for an evaluation excavation trench across one ridge and its associated furrows of the medieval ridge-and-furrow.

Identify the optimum location for an evaluation excavation trench across a recently identified feature that has the distinct appearance of an east/west agger with associated ditches in the centre of Hermitage Wood.

Summary:

This was yet another highly rewarding session of excavation by the end of which natural geology appears to have been revealed across much of the trench. Another rich assemblage was amassed, that included more intriguing small finds. Once again, participating volunteers had the opportunity to excavate varied and interesting archaeology. Finally, there continued to be no evidence of the concentrated assemblage of Roman pot discovered by Landowners Historical Research Group (LHRG) detectorists.