



NEWSLETTER NO 1

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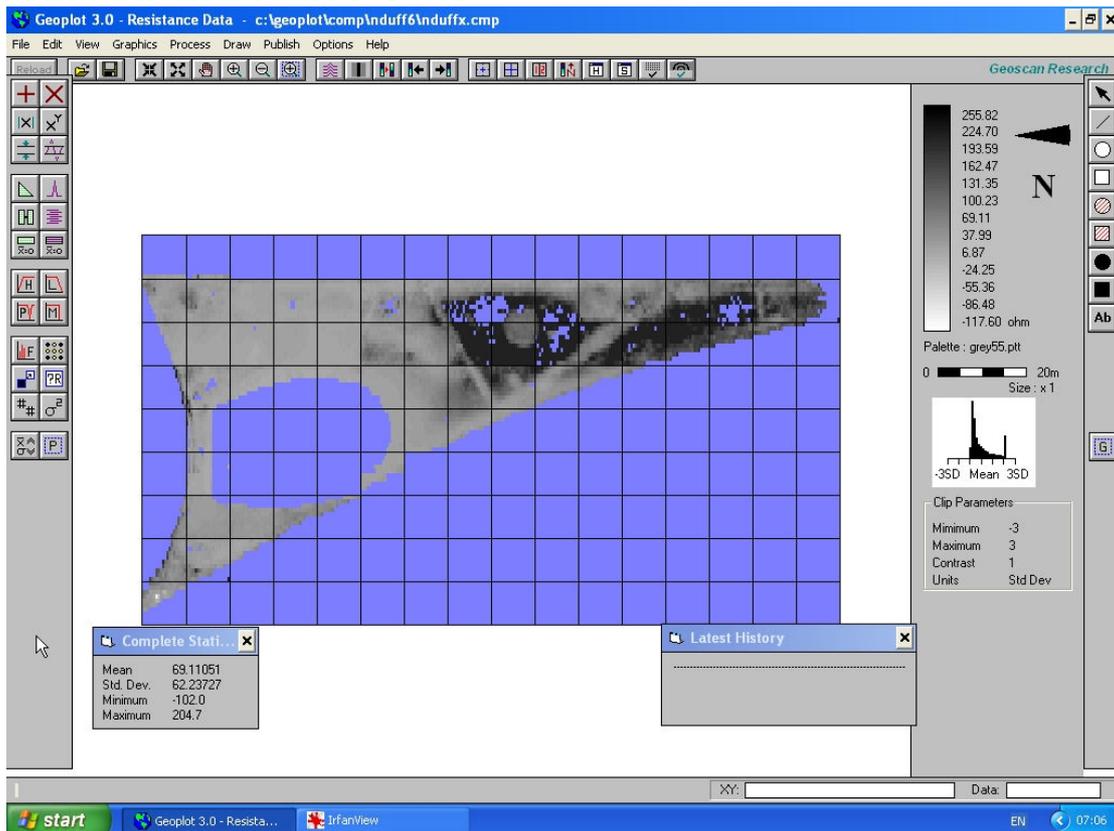
Since my last update, a lot has been happening.

Firstly, we lost out to the weather in the Spring of 2010 and were unable to do any field-walking at all. We got the crops in and the weather but, the wrong sort of weather. This has meant that the Autumn season of field-walking was even more important, if we were salvage something for the Field Survey in 2010.

I am pleased to report that we have been beavering over the last few weeks and have been able to walk well over half the field off Menthorpe Lane before the crop had advanced too much. The items have not yet been catalogued and identified, but first indications are of much Medieval pottery and a few interesting 'finds' if not of great archaeological importance. Quite a few people turned out to help so thanks are due to you all for your valuable assistance. We had a number of new helpers including the whole of the older pupils of North Duffield School. I am delighted to say that new Headteacher, Andrew Russell, is very keen to involve the school in all things historical and archaeological and has shown more than a passing interest in getting involved on a personal level as well. The children washed all the 'finds' from the field on Menthorpe Lane. This event, a few weeks ago, was a sight to behold. I came out of the classroom at the end of 1 ½ hours in a sweat, and went home and locked myself in a dark place.

As of the last weekend, we started a new field off the A163. Unfortunately my request for assistance largely was unrewarded with only a few of us turning out. This field is the one with the large complex of cropmarks and hopes were high of many interesting 'finds'. Yes, you've guessed it. We found nothing of the sort. An almost barren field with little or no items of interest and precious little of anything else. Nothing much older than post-Medieval. This field is extremely sandy soil which blows in the wind in dry periods and I suspect that this has been going on for hundreds of years burying the archaeology under a meter or so of sandy soil. Well over half the field has been completed and I have hopes of doing some more before the crop gets the upper hand.

In terms of Geophysics, we have completed a Resistivity survey of the village green, (see attached image). This has revealed some interesting 'anomalies' and those of you who are Time Team addicts will know that that is how the experts refer to those things that are interesting. If you examine the image you will see some straight lines which we believe are 'services' but also you might just see some circular features which are causing some excitement and need more investigation. Watch this space.



And whilst on the subject of Resistivity Surveys, I have made the first steps to survey a field North of the village that houses some of the Iron Age hut circles or Roundhouse bases. I have not got too far as my time has been taken up lately with field-walking. The field is permanently under grass and therefore we can make progress there at any time when the weather allows.

A request for villagers to donate a 1x1 meter square in their gardens to excavate to a depth of about 1 meter just to see what we can find met with a good response with, currently, thirteen gardens in the scheme. The plan for the 'Big Village Dig', is for the householder to do their own excavation, under supervision, but we will do it if that is preferred. We will have experts on hand to identify anything we find. So if you have not already volunteered to take part, perhaps you might like to consider doing so. The object of the exercise is to get a snapshot of the village. My belief has always been that, if our ancient ancestors thought North Duffield was a good place to live, it is very likely that whatever it was that attracted them to the area, still applies today. There is a strong chance that they chose the actual footprint that the village now occupies and therefore the only chance we have to test that idea, is root about in folk's gardens. That is planned for sometime next year. If you would like to get involved please let me know.

Since we now believe that it is likely that the Romans once lived and worked in our village, it is more than a possibility that their residence lies somewhere hereabouts. We have found Roman pottery and 6 Roman coins have been found by the metal-detectorist and Sod's Law almost decrees that the Roman Villa is under some one's house!! Or in their garden.

And so to future plans. Well, we have discussed the possibility of reconstructing a Roundhouse somewhere near the site of the ones we believe we see traces of North of the village. We would like to involve the school children and local people in the project and, to make it as authentic as possible, we are sourcing the materials from the local area. We are negotiating with David Simpson and Natural England to cur reeds for thatching. We have started to select some silver birch brush which the Friends of Skipwith Common have cleared from the Common. These will form the roof struts and walls of the Roundhouse. We are in negotiations which may result in a site becoming available. Tony Stevens has visited a reconstructed set of Roundhouses at Butser in Hampshire and taken many photographs. I have downloaded some plans from the Internet, so things are starting to come together.

There is still a lot to be done. One thing we have been discussing is how to utilise the Roundhouse once it is built. Ideas range from a Visitor Centre to an Activity Centre where children could spend the night camping in a Roundhouse carrying out associated Iron Age activities such as thatching, weaving, spinning and pot-making.

Meanwhile, there is plenty to be done. A number of fields need to be surveyed using the Resistivity Meter and perhaps, later a Magnetometer. More fields will be available for field-walking in the Spring and, with a bit of luck, there will be some reeds to harvest.

Finally, if anyone is interested in a Course entitled 'An introduction to Archaeology':-

to be held at Bedern Hall, York, 2.00 – 4.00pm on Tuesday afternoons: January 18th, January 25th, February 1st, February 15th, February 22nd, March 1st

The course costs £25.00 (£20.00 for unwaged/retired). People can also join individual sessions for £5.00 per session. To book your place, please send a cheque, payable to 'PLACE' to: Dr Margaret Atherden, PLACE Office, York St John University, Lord Mayor's Walk, York, YO31 7EX. (Tel: 01904 766291. E-mail: place@yorks.ac.uk)

This short course is designed to enable participants to understand, visit and, if they wish, become actively involved with archaeological projects currently underway in the region. We will visit excavations at Hungate and assist with practical tasks for the Blansby Park Project. Participants will learn about air photography, geophysical survey, working with finds, archaeological illustration and recording. They will also be able to help prepare for publication the excavation of a Late Bronze Age barrow. Visits will be made to several York Archaeological Trust attractions: JORVIK Viking Centre, Barley Hall, Micklegate Bar Museum and DIG. There will also be an optional field visit to Blansby Park, near Pickering. No prior experience of archaeology is needed!

It just remains for me to thank everyone who has helped in the years activities. I hope you get as much out of it as I do. To wish you all a very Merry Christmas and Prosperous New Year and a , perhaps forlorn hope, that the current arctic weather soon come to an end.