

Downley Common Newsletter

Quarterly Newsletter of the Downley Common Preservation Society Issue 27. April 2006

Web: <http://www.downleycommon.org.uk>. Email bill.thompson@rotherwood.co.uk

New DCPS Tractor

The Society is shortly to acquire a new tractor to replace the old David Brown 885 purchased back in the late 1980's. The new one is a refurbished Massey Ferguson 565 purchased from Dumelow International in Reading. Dumelow are in the business of refurbishing old tractors and then exporting them principally to Africa. This approach suits the Society as it is hoped the resulting machine will be reliable with low cost spares. All the things that appeal to the African customer also appeal to us!



Three of your committee went to the Dumelow premises to inspect the unrefurbished versions. The picture shows the

tractor in it's original state. We are assured that its condition on delivery will be quite different!

We will be officially unveiling the new tractor at the Downley Walk on May 21. We expect a rush of new volunteers wanting to drive it, so please form an orderly queue.

Forthcoming Events

- There will be a Member's meeting in the Village Hall on Thursday 4 May at 8.00pm. An agenda will be posted on notice boards shortly.
- This year's Rogation Walk will be held on 21 May 2006 starting at 2pm. We will meet at the Village Hall in the High Street. Leaflets will be distributed shortly describing the route. The new tractor will be unveiled to an admiring audience at the same time.
- Downley Day is to be held on June 17th this year on Commonside. The DCPS will be appearing as usual. Any volunteers who are interested in assisting on the stall should contact the Editor.

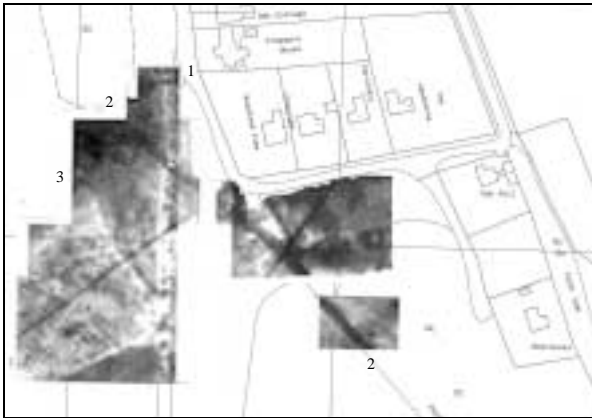
	Diary	
4 May 2006, 8.00pm	Member's Meeting	Village Hall
7 May 2006, 10.00am	Working Party.	Bus turning Circle
21 May 2006, 2.00pm	Downley Walk	High Street
4 June 2006, 10.00am	Working Party.	Bus turning Circle
17 June 2006, 1.00pm	Downley Day	Commonside
2 July 2006, 10.00am	Working Party.	Bus turning Circle
6 August, 2006, 10.00am	Working Party.	Bus turning Circle
3 Sep 2006, 10.00am	Working Party.	Bus turning Circle
7 Sep 2006, 8.00pm	Member's Meeting	Village Hall
5 Oct 2006, 8.00pm	AGM	Village Hall

The Big Dig on the Common

Members may be aware of the ongoing project to survey the Common for archaeological remains. One of the primary objectives has been to attempt to locate the old brick kiln that is believed to have existed to the north of the cricket pitch.

Magnetometer surveys followed by small excavations last year did not discover the location of the kiln and it has been concluded that its position was likely to have been under the road itself.

On 14th March, the archaeology project on Downley Common entered a new and more substantial phase with the digging of trenches to explore the resistivity results obtained earlier. The plan below shows the results obtained in a survey last year.



In the words of Jill Eyers; "The features of interest are labelled 1, 2 & 3.

No. 1 is a circular feature around 18 to 20m in diameter. The northern edge is fairly clear on this plot, but not all the feature was covered in the survey work as brambles, a post and the track get in the way (where the number 1 is positioned).

No. 2 Is a very long, linear feature which is c. 4m wide. It is dark in colour and therefore a very low resistance feature. This has caused us much head-scratching, as it mysteriously follows a footpath. However, the footpath cannot be creating the low resistance feature as these are consistently high resistance and much narrower - only ½ to 1m wide. In places, on a good quality printout the white trace of the high resistance footpath can be seen overprinting the wider low resistance feature. The only interpretation for this feature is a wide and deep ditch. In this area these would usually be ancient field or other

land boundaries which is enticingly hinting at an Iron Age or Roman-British date!

No. 3 is a much more diffuse feature, very difficult to see on the poorer quality plots of the website image here, but it is circular and around 10m in diameter. There may be a second one adjacent to it."

So on March 14th, a JCB turned up to excavate some quite substantial trenches to find out what was underneath. Two trenches were dug and a group of experts was on hand to examine what was revealed. Again in the words of Jill Eyers;

"We managed to complete the work at a break-neck speed. We did find evidence of bricks - from some kiln near by - I am now the proud holder of half a Downley brick! That was in Trench 1.

Trench 2 the 'biggy' showed the ditch we had suspected in geophysics, but much more shallow. I doubt that this is a section of Grim's ditch now - more likely a land boundary and we will have to do some landscape studies - next part of the project - to find out!". For more details on the project go to www.lhi.org.uk - type in 'downley' as the search word. Then the information will be under 'March 2006 big dig'

Previous speculation that the real purpose of the archaeology project was to crack the "Don Le Code" and discover evidence of a 400 year old Spanish settlement in the area has not been substantiated, despite the possibility that the circular impression was something much more recent than an Iron Age hut. However, rumours are circulating among those present at the dig, that certain artefacts were uncovered and quickly spirited away!

