



Wiltshire Archaeological & Natural History Society

Archaeology Field Group Newsletter Number 13

“EQUIPMENT TRAINING DAY”

Getting to grips with the technology

On Saturday the 9th April, 16 members of the AFG met up on Lower Mill Farm at Horton for a days training on some of the kit we use on field activities. It was good to see new members turn up like Lynn Mackay, who made it all the way from Weston-Super-Mare, as well as the familiar faces!

The intention was to get more AFG members confident with the surveying kit, resistivity plotting equipment and finds detecting equipment so that they have the knowledge to use the instruments when on excavations or field activities.

The day was helped by one of the hottest days in the year so far, a dry field and plenty of sunshine. The only downside was that the fully charged and ready to go *Topcon* Total Station refused to give up its secrets as it would not respond to various combinations of button pressing and hard stares from the operators. Securing a relevant Operating Manual is essential, so if any of you have access or means of getting hold of a manual for the *Topcon GTS 3* then let Jim Gunter (the nominated Total Station trainer) and the rest of us know! The five, fixed length and graduated ropes devised for speeding up the layout of the grids for field walking were trialled and appear to work. The quartermaster just needs to make some faster winding spools!

After splitting in to small groups Mike McQueen revealed the secrets of resistivity surveying and Brian Clarke took the lead on the use of the good old reliable dumpy level and the hand-held *Garmin eTrex* GPS position finder. The third group were given the opportunity to use our newly acquired *Garret EuroAce* twin coil metal detector and I provided coins and different metal items for the operators to identify.

Like any equipment for any role, actually using it and setting it up your self is very different from watching someone else use it. By the end of the day, when all the groups had rotated through the three training sessions, the members seemed to be pleased to have had the opportunity to get hands on use without the pressure of having to get vital results during an actual project. Use of the metal detector with samples that you can actually see showed that it is not a simple switch-on-and-find process and getting used to the different displays and beeps eventually gave people the confidence to be able to set up and use the kit. Likewise with the GPS, Dumpy level and resistivity survey kit – the more you use them, the easier it gets. The training notes will be updated and put on the WANHS AFG website for all to access.

Our thanks go to David Rider's brother who allowed us to use his field at Lower Mill Farm (and his free-range hens' eggs make excellent omelettes!)



Dumpy Levels and GPS



Resistivity (Can you see what it is yet?)



Metal detectors detecting metal detectors!