

Guernsey Museum Archaeology Group Newsletter

April 2009

Hello all,

A quick update on what's been going on for the last few weeks. Mostly this concerns the airport extension, but there are a couple of other things to mention first.

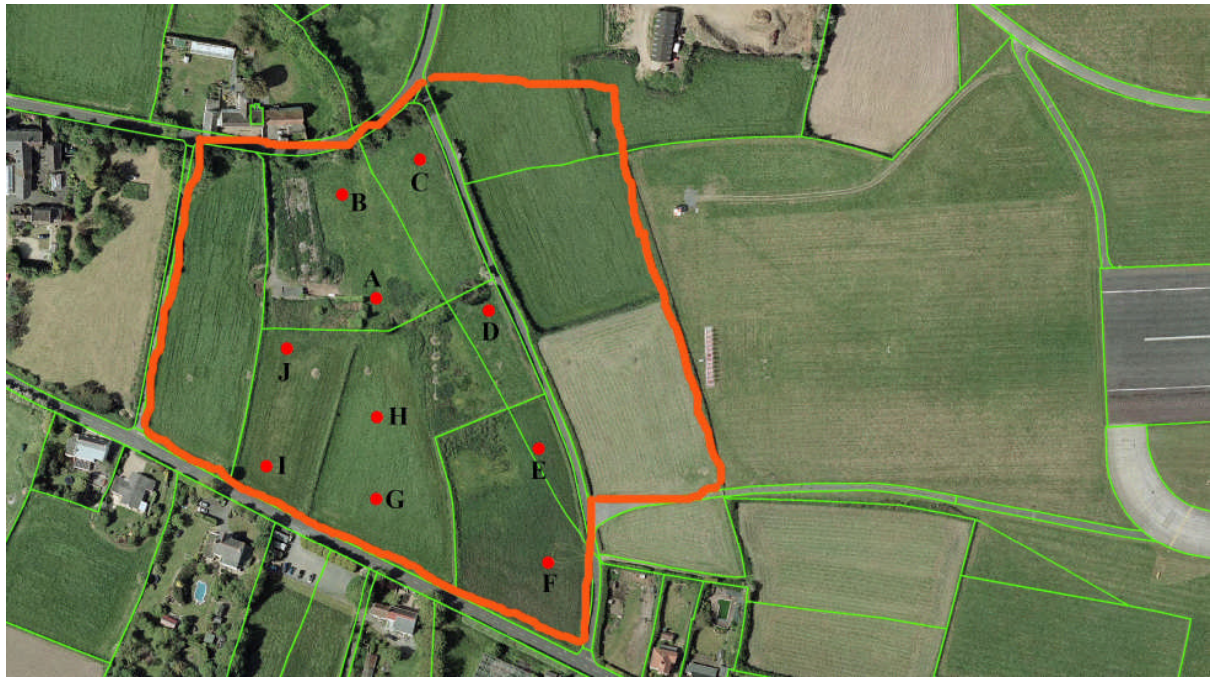
On the right is an x-ray of the hilt of the sword found at King's Road just before Christmas. Esther Cameron has completed her initial report on the recent finds and she says that there are mineral preserved organic remains – horn and wood, and probably textile too – on all of the iron items (sword, shield boss and brooch). The sword has traces of possible bindings, a suspension loop and at least one rivet; there are four rivets visible on the x-ray of the shield boss. It will probably be several months before the items are fully conserved but I'll keep you posted if I hear any more news.

Thanks to everybody who walked a couple of fields at Richard Keen's farmhouse at Les Prevosts on a cold day in February. We picked up a grand total of 1447 items, including more than 400 pieces of flint, and about 750 sherds of pottery, mostly post-medieval. There was a reasonable scatter of Normandy Gritty Ware but only a couple of very small prehistoric sherds. It's interesting to see just how much material there can be, even in an area not known for particularly intensive occupation.



Airport runway extension

As you may have seen in the Press, we have started work at the west end of the airport runway, in the fields which have been purchased by the States in advance of any possible runway extension. We've started by digging ten 2m x 2m test pits at the points shown on the air photo below:



In due course we will dig more test pits in the fields closest to the runway, but the northern one has just been sown with grass seed so that will have to wait till later in the year. The westernmost field has not been purchased by the States – I just put it within the orange line by mistake, sorry!

The results so far have been quite mixed. The central area of the site is very boggy, with a stream rising between E and H and flowing northwards down the valley. Trenches A, B and C all became unworkable fairly quickly, particularly C, where the water table was only a foot or so beneath the surface. There was a scattering of medieval pottery, a few flints and a few sherds of prehistoric pottery in these trenches. Trenches D and E followed a similar pattern, but D turned up some more interesting features: three postholes, two of them containing what I think is Bronze Age pottery, and a fine flint, with a serrated edge. As you can see from the picture, the postholes were not too easy to dig, being just about at the height (or should that be the depth?) of the water table...



The best results so far have come from trench F, at the south-eastern corner of the site. Here we have what appears to be a deep, elongated pit, with some stones in the base and evidence of intense burning on the lower sides. As you can just see from the photo we have of course put the spoil heap on top of the other half of the feature, so we'll have to move that... there are a couple of sherds of Normandy Gritty Ware from the top of the ditch fill, but I'm pretty sure that the feature itself is prehistoric.



We should finish this first phase of test-pits by Easter, and then I'm planning to return to trenches D and F, to try and work out how far the archaeology extends in these areas. We have been offered some help with a mini-JCB by the airport authorities, and I hope that we can extend our small test pits into a decent sized excavation. If and when that happens there should be more opportunity for you to get involved, so I'll let you know how we get on. In the meantime, if you're passing the site and you see us at work by all means stop and say hello.

See you soon
Phil

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PS don't forget the lecture at Candie on Friday (3rd April), at 8pm: Dr Michael Hoskin of the University of Cambridge, on 'The Megalithic tombs of Brittany in their European context'.