

SUNNY SHROPSHIRE

July 29, 2017 Trysor Day of Archaeology 2017, Explore Posts, Fieldwork, UK Shropshire

After a busy week, the Day of Archaeology 2017 is a quiet day, staying out of the rain and catching up on post and emails. The past four days have seen us in Shropshire undertaking an evaluation excavation on a farm. A proposed new poultry unit would occupy land where a cropmark viewed on aerial photographs suggests there might be a prehistoric or later enclosure. The geophysics also looked promising.

Three-and-a-bit days of scrabbling in glacial gravels and sands followed. A few hours of heavy rain on the third morning mercifully turned the light brown dust that formed the surface of all our evaluation trenches into a limited range of brown shades. This was enough to identify the line of an enclosing ditch, which had already shown up on the geophysical survey and as a cropmark, but was proving elusive in our evaluation trenches. Hand-digging this feature produced a sheep's tooth and a much corroded piece of metal which looked like it might be a very old nail... enough to prove the existence of the ditch. As for the other features, they all tallied with modern groundworks and geological features. It looks like Shropshire just lost an Iron Age enclosure and gained an "Unknown" heritage asset.

Although the archaeology proved to be a bit of a let down, the highs of the week included working in a field set in a particularly beautiful part of England. The Wrekin hill rose nearby and we even managed a quick visit to Wroxeter to look at the Roman remains. The lovely mansion near our little site was rescued by its present owners in the 1960s from an American owner who, having finished using the place, was laying plans to dynamite the entire building to infill a nearby lake! Shropshire, we discover on every visit, is packed with varied and fascinating archaeological remains and historical surprises.

So Day of Archaeology 2017 finds us back in our offices, reflecting on the week that has past and the real meaning of the evidence we have collected. Having been out all week, there are emails to catch up with, other projects to think about. There is also the need to unpack field kit, wash our dusty work clothes and dub our dusty boots, ready for next time. And all the while, the July rain beats on our windows and we thank our lucky stars that we had a few dry days to do what we had to do this week. Archaeology is much better when savoured in dry weather, with the occasional shower to help out!

(Photograph below: Happiness is a set of straight evaluation trenches).

