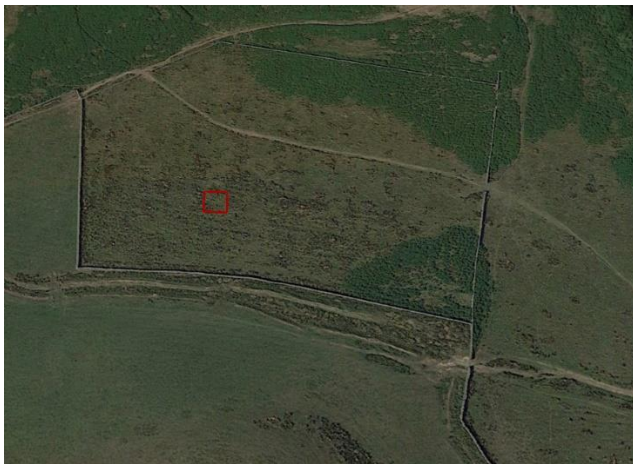


Pendle Archaeological Group

Rushy Field Test Pit Excavation 19/07/20

Three 1 metre square test pits were opened on the 19/07/20 in an area of interest identified by a magnetometer survey conducted by Michael Woods in 2018. The site is a field bounded by dry stone walls, to the north of Calf Hill and the bank and ditch system which PAG have explored archaeologically several times in the last few years. The interpretation of the results by M. Woods suggested a dense concentration of linear and circular features. The sites location being on an area of relatively flat land at about 270 meters and sheltered from the north by Pendle Hill would be a suitable location for settlement. The test pits were clustered around a point 45 meters east of the south western corner of the field and 30 meters north of the southern boundary. Test Pit 1 SD 78067 38573, Test Pit 2 SD 78071 38573 Test Pit 3 SD 7806 3856 (these references generated by GPS). Phase one habitat classification at the time probably D6 Wet heath/acidic grassland mosaic.



Approximate location of the test pit area.

Excavation Methodology

Each test pit was 1 metre square and one side aligned roughly north south. After deturfing and cleaning each pit was divided in half by a temporary section aligned east west. One half of each pit was then excavated by trowel or shovel in spits to a depth of 10cm. The unexcavated half of the test pit was then removed in one spit and the whole pit cleaned and recorded. This method was continued down to a depth of approximately 40cm to 45cm depending on the pit at which point the deposit believed to be natural was encountered. In two pits a further one spade depth and one spade wide sondage was dug in one corner to determine if this “natural deposit” extended downward for at least one spade depth which it did. Time constraints meant further excavation and cleaning of sections was not possible.

Recording Methodology

Recording followed the system of self-guided test pit digging and recording instructions first developed by Cambridge University, used by The University of Leicester and now by Professor Carenza Lewis in her Dig School. This system was chosen for the following reasons. Each pit was dug and recorded by one person so maintain as much as possible social distance. This was also an opportunity to test drive a system that could be used in a future village test pit community archaeology project and an opportunity for them to be involved in real life archaeological recording.

We deviated from this system in two respects we did not record the topsoil and turf as the first layer/context and due to time constraints we did not draw/photograph any sections.

Stratigraphy

Basically there were four layers and these were found in all the test pits, the first layer was the turf and topsoil which extended down to a depth of approximately 10 cm. The top soil was dark, sandy with a sharply defined base. The second layer extended down to depth of about 20cm and was a relatively homogeneous brown sandy clay with occasional fist size stones and fragments of coke/coal which were found throughout the layer but generally reduced with depth. The third layer was a mottled orange brown sandy clay. The boundary between this and the layer above was indistinct. Below this was a layer of waterlogged predominantly pale grey clay with a sharp boundary with the layer above at about 40cm. The one spade width and depth sondage revealed stones in various stages of decay. This layer was interpreted as the natural, probably glacial boulder clay.

Finds

Other than the fragments of coal/coke mentioned above the only other materials larger than a sand grain were a few pebbles and small pieces of Chert none of which displayed any of the features universally accepted, indicating working by human hands.

Discussion

The interpretation of the Magnetometer survey supplied by Mike Woods suggested the area contained linear and circular ditches.

We found no evidence of such features, this could be due to:

- The Magnetometer results are either false or caused by geology or some other reason.
- We were unlucky and simply missed the archaeology.
- Thirdly we could not detect features because the features were indistinguishable from the surrounding matrix or so heavily disturbed as to make them impossible to detect.

If there are observable features cut into the "natural" then the depth of overlying layers makes exposing them problematic without the use of machinery.

The profile suggest ploughing to a depth of about 30cm in the relatively recent past and there is anecdotal evidence that this field was cultivated during the Second World War. The depth of postulated disturbance might mean any features that do exist are likely to be truncated. If the site is prehistoric then finds are likely to be few and so it is unlikely we can detect features from the distribution of finds without extensive excavation.

Future work

No evidence of features cutting into the natural was found but the size and number of the test pits means the existence of features cannot be discounted. So the main conclusion must be that the exercise is inconclusive. There may be a case for returning to re-excavate the test pits and extend each one by 1 to 1.5 meters say in two spits to reveal more of the "natural" to ascertain if it is cut by any features. However this would still constitute a very small sample area with the risk of still missing anything that was there. The three test pits were located in vegetation dominated by grass, moss and heath bedstraw avoiding for practical reasons areas of dense rush growth. There is an argument for locating more pits in areas of dense rush growth to see if this is an indicator of anything archaeological or the result of environmental variation.



Test Pit 1 sondage section showing layer 3 and above layer 2 and 1.



Test Pit 1 Spade sondage into "natural".

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