

## Other News

### The Big Dig Weekend

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Everyone was talking about it, some people refused to be involved with it and it has been a source of endless debate ever since it happened at the end of June 2003.

What was it?

#### THE BIG DIG WEEKEND!!

As the debate raged, the Society decided to go ahead, at the request of Channel 4, and open the Homefield site for the Saturday of the weekend. I also decided to act as a consultant advisor for this area.

We were completely overwhelmed by the response! Over fifty youngsters with families and picnics arrived and they all wanted to dig! Many stayed for the whole day, having to be almost chased off site at the end! The site was open for excavation and Dawn (Hodgson) helped with the finds, being constantly supplied with bits and pieces throughout the day by very enthusiastic young archaeologists. We also had the geophys team out under the leadership of John (Oswin).

Jude (Harris) put on an excellent exhibition in the barn, Sue (Woods), Isla (Tuck) and Mary (Huntley) kept everybody supplied with teas and a great day was had by all with the help of many volunteers from the members of the Society providing supervision and help to all the visitors.

The idea was the brainchild of the Channel 4 *Time Team* programme. They wanted the whole country to take part in a test pit excavation in gardens, but the response was so overwhelming they were unable to meet the supervision requirements to enable everyone to take part, so asked Societies and organisations involved in archaeological fieldwork to open sites for public participation.

The test pit programme was closely monitored by Time Team, who supplied all participants with a recording kit and detailed instructions on how to conduct their small excavation. Those who took part were given a special number to call if they needed any expert advice. The test pits were all followed up and the results collected. However,

there was outcry from many professional bodies and even some societies with claims that the whole exercise was very irresponsible, encouraging people to dig without special training. (The fact that there is no law in this country to stop you digging a 1m hole in your back garden, unless it happens to be a Scheduled Ancient Monument, did not seem to occur to most of them!!)

This Society felt it was right to get involved and offer support for anybody wishing to participate in the process and to open our own excavations for those who were unable to dig their own test pits.

After the weekend the debate continued to rage and the jury is still out. There are still those who claim it was a massively irresponsible act, but we had a great day and it was good for the Society to show a positive interest in the event that was designed to encourage people to know more about archaeology. After all, what else are we about anyway?

**Jayne Lawes**

**Director of Excavations**