
The Secrets of the Downs

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In July, BACAS joined BaNES for an open day at the University of Bath, focussing on the Prehistory of Bath. It tied in with the local APEX (Able Pupils Extending Opportunities) programme, a four day programme for some of Bath's most able students. As BACAS' training dig had finished a few weeks previously, they visited the St Algar's Project Group excavation, where they were able to learn about working on an archaeological dig site, including finds processing, geophysics, and recording the site. They did geophysics surveys on part of the field that had not previously been surveyed, and were very excited to find evidence of new archaeological features.

The Open Day was a chance for them to present what they had learnt to the general public. The displays inside the Arts Barn also included information about local prehistory and artefacts from local sites, plus a display on using map regression to find out more about activity in the area without having to excavate. Bob Whittaker created a more specific display relating to Bathampton Down, based on Rod Thomas's work, as well as previous work done on the area. Rod and Marek Lewcun led guided walks along two different routes, dodging golf balls from a tournament being held at the Golf Club, showing archaeological features and areas of interest.

The geophysics demonstration was very popular. John Oswin brought out all the equipment. The enclosed nature of the yard and an iron plough meant that the magnetometer was only on display, but the resistivity meter and the Ground Penetrating Radar were both demonstrated in action. The Magnetic Susceptibility Meter in particular caught people's imagination, although that may have had to do with its somewhat raygun-like design. BaNES put on an excellent display of replica flint tools, from the trusty hand axe to the more cutting edge technology of the microlith scythe. The coil pot making was also very popular with the children who attended.

About 150 members of the public attended, we had some excellent coverage in the Bath Chronicle, and the day was a great success.