

Community Archaeology Study Days 2008/9



Geophysics

With Steve Dobson, University of Sheffield

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Feedback from the study day:

'Really interesting learning about geophysics for a complete novice. Interesting presentation enabled me to gain a basic understanding of the subject.'

'Excellent exposition of the subject.'

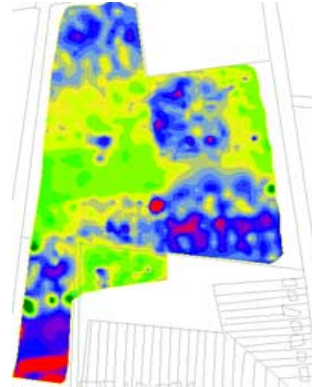


Geophysical methods in archaeology have opened up new worlds of investigation. Using geophysics has become crucial to archaeological fieldwork, especially as it often allows for the rapid study of a site with minimal or no resulting

damage. This is important today, as much archaeological work seeks to preserve sites rather than destroying them by excavation. Geophysics involves studying the earth in which archaeological sites lie by using sensing techniques for mapping and imaging the relevant area. Archaeologists use geophysics to define the underground features of a site, such as remaining walls or ditches. The discipline has grown exponentially in recent decades to include various kinds of technology, including satellite photographs, magnetometry, ground penetrating radar, and metal detecting. These methods allow the dimensions of a site and at least some of its material to be determined without having to excavate. They also help to

establish whether a site is worth further investigation. Geophysics therefore plays a large part in the accurate study of archaeological sites.

This study day allowed us to learn more about the different methods available for geophysical survey, including computer software. Our group of fifteen looked at one example near the river Ouse to find out how exactly these methods provide archaeological information about a site. It was a great introduction to a complex but interesting focus of analysis.



Pictures: <http://www.earthsound.ie/geochemical.html>

