

## Focus entries

The following pages are a compilation of the entries in Focus on Thorverton, reporting on the Thorverton Community Archaeology Project:

### a) July/August 2019

## Thorverton Community Archaeology Project

The project is well under way now. Over the past three weeks the two fields between the house at Lynch Farm and Dark Lane have been subjected to a thorough geophysical survey. The initial findings from that survey will be/have been explained at the Open Day on 29 June. The project team is most grateful to Nick Heard for allowing access to carry out the survey. One of the AC Archaeology project team, Charlotte Coles, has been into Thorverton School to talk about the project and to invite the children to design a logo. She was delighted with the enthusiasm of the children. The logo chosen was designed by Wren, aged 5. We will be using this on all communications about the project.



The archaeological work involving excavation of part of the site is planned to take place between 14 and 28 September. Several parishioners have already expressed an interest in being involved in this. Our parish clerk, Alison Marshall, or one of the project team will contact you nearer the time if you have shown an interest.

The project now has presence on social media, so you can follow progress on the project's Facebook page: @ThorvertonArchaeology or on the twitter page: @ThorvertonArch.

There is one task for which we need to appoint someone: the project should be evaluated as it progresses over the next few months. This will involve documenting the different stages as evidence of what was carried out by the project. There is a separate notice in the Notices section advertising for someone to do this.

### b) September 2019

## Thorverton Community Archaeology Project



### Prehistoric Settlement in the Exe Valley

As many readers will be aware, the parish currently has its own community archaeology project, located in fields next to the Post Office and Dark Lane. Three archaeological trial trenches were dug in 2017, which revealed settlement evidence dating to the Middle Neolithic (c. 5000 years old) Bronze Age (4000) and late Iron Age (2,500). The archaeological features discovered consisted of pits and ditches containing prehistoric pottery, as well as pieces of worked flint and charred hazelnuts.

Thorverton and the Exe Valley has a long association with prehistoric archaeology, with a number of burial mounds, settlement enclosures and artefact scatters present, while the local mid 20th century Archaeologist John Uglow even found a stone axe in the field where the work is being undertaken.



*Geophysical Survey Open day – photo by Doug Stokes.*

This archaeological work on site has generated a lot of local interest in the archaeology and heritage of the parish and, from this, the idea of a community excavation was born. Heritage Lottery Funding was then awarded along with other funding from Devon County Council, Mid Devon District Council, Thorverton Parish Council and other generous local organisations. I visited the school and talked to the children about Thorverton's past, the project and how they can help by designing a logo. Wren, aged 5 was

the winner of the logo competition and this is now used for all the project publicity.

This summer has also seen a geophysical survey carried out on the land with exciting results. We have found what appears to be evidence for a multi-phase prehistoric landscape over a large area, including possible settlement enclosures, associated boundary and drainage ditches from early fields and a ring ditch of a probable former round barrow burial mound. There was also a popular 'have a go' at geophysics event with an expert from Substrata, a Bideford-based specialist survey company.

The next and main phase of the project will be the excavation; this is the chance for the local community, with assistance from professional archaeologists, to explore this archaeology and learn more about the past in Thorverton, on a site which was probably the precursor to the village itself.

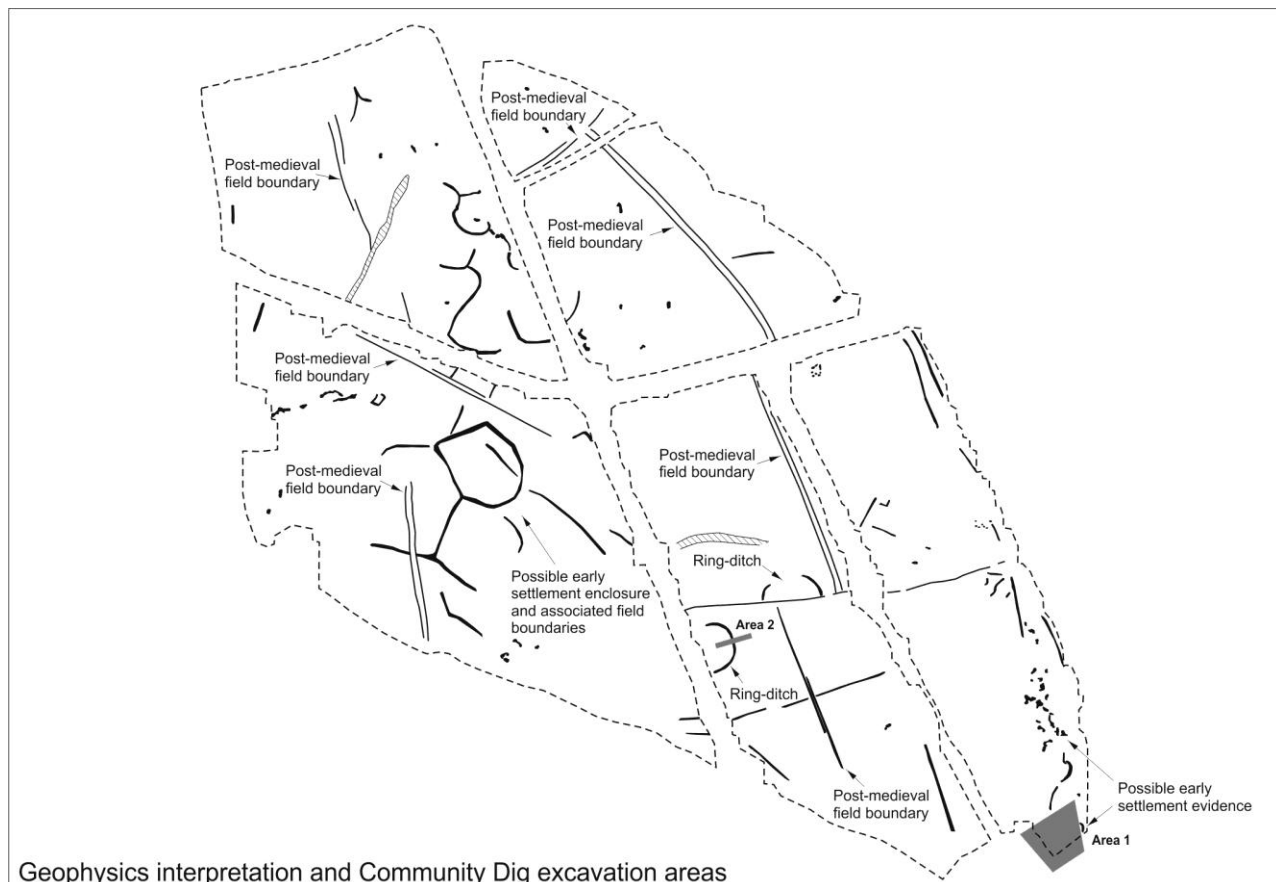
The excavations will run from the 18th-28th September and will target two areas, including known areas of early settlement and the ring ditch. There will be a public open day on Saturday 28th September with guided tours of the excavations, displays of the finds discovered and other activities. Thorverton WI will be providing light refreshments.

Beyond the excavation the future plans for the project will include a publication report detailing the findings and a series of talks to schools and various local societies.

If you would like to take part in the excavations, either learning how to dig or helping out with other activities, and you have not already let Alison Marshall know, please contact Charlotte Coles at AC archaeology ([ccoles@acarchaeology.co.uk](mailto:ccoles@acarchaeology.co.uk)). Demand is high and the closing date to register is 9th September. To keep up to date with the findings while the excavations are underway please follow our Twitter page (@ThorvertonArch) and Facebook page (@ThorvertonArchaeology).

*Charlotte Coles*  
*Finds and Archives Officer, AC archaeology*

Map of findings below:





c) October 2019

## Thorverton Community Archaeology Project



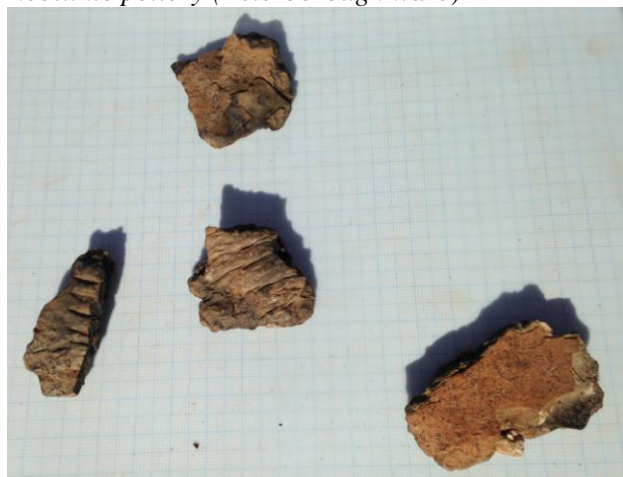
As *Focus* goes to print, we do not have final details on the results of the archaeological dig in the field above Dark Lane. Around 100 people have been taking part in the excavations, many of them from the local community (who will be easily recognised by their creaky knees). Some 5,000-year-old tools, pottery and food remains were found in an earlier dig and it is hoped that more would be found..

As well as the Middle Neolithic remains, it was expected that the dig would also reveal evidence for Middle Iron Age settlement (c. 500 BC), as well as a large ring ditch from an Early Bronze Age (c. 2000BC) former burial mound.

The excavation has been sponsored by, amongst others, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Devon County Council, Mid Devon District Council, Thorverton Parish Council and Thorverton Local History Society.



Above: assessing the finds; below: Some fragments of Neolithic pottery (Peterborough ware)



d) November 2019

## Thorverton Community Archaeology Project



Ten days of excavation activity in the field to the west of Dark Lane in late-September concluded with an Open Day at which the public were able to see the site and some of the finds. I interviewed Simon Hughes of AC Archaeology about the excavation work.

Simon told me that the findings had been far better than they had expected: one of the two sites excavated during the dig - that closest to Dark Lane - had evidence of Neolithic settlement activity. Pits had been found, associated with the deposition of things that had been thrown away, in particular worked flints and Peterborough-ware pottery, some of which had fingernail definition. The pottery allowed the team to date the likely settlement activity at around 3,200 to 2,900 BC. The other site - across the field nearer to Lynch Farm - which had been identified as potentially interesting by the earlier geophysical survey, showed a large ditch with four pitches. These would have supported timber posts. They formed a perfect arc, almost certainly part of a circle. This henge-like feature is associated with ceremonial or ritual activity rather than domestic activity. While its discovery was something of a surprise, this part of the Exe Valley does have an Early Bronze Age cursus (processional way) and an Early Neolithic hilltop causewayed enclosure. It confirmed that this area was an important religious landscape during later prehistory.

Simon had been delighted with the level of community involvement with the project. There had been up to 15 people digging each day, some of them for several days. People had needed a certain amount of resilience, with the first week being rather hot and dry and the second week quite wet. He was very pleased to see how the excavation had had the effect of bringing the community together, with people talking together in a way that they might not normally have the chance to.

The Open Day was very well supported, with many people visiting not just from the local community but also from other parts of Devon. Thorverton was on the archaeological map again. Next, the artefacts and soil samples will be analysed and a full report produced in around 9-12 months' time.

Please also see the photos on the back cover.

*Neville Lane*



# Archaeological Project

