SAWTRY HISTORY SOCIETY (SHS) HILL TOP EXCAVATION
SEASON 1, SESSION 3 (18 - 20 JAN 19)

1. **Venue**. Hill Top, off Vinegar Hill, Alconbury Weston. Access will be via the gate as indicated on the map at Attachment 1.

2. **Participation**.

a. **SHS**. The excavation will be open free to all members of SHS (as at 17 Jan 19).

b. **JigSaw Affiliates**. Participation is free to members of JigSaw affiliated groups/societies who have provided confirmation they are participating under their group/society insurance, otherwise they will be required to participate as SHS temporary members (see sub-para 2.c below).

c. **SHS Temporary Members**. Non-members of SHS or JigSaw affiliated groups/societies as at 17 Jan 19 are also welcome, but for insurance purposes, will be required to take out SHS temporary membership at a daily fee of £1.

3. **Application**. Those wishing to participate are to complete the SHS Participation Application Form. Further details are contained in the application form.

4. **Programme**. The daily routine will loosely follow the timings below:

Day & Date	**Times**	**Activity**
Friday	1230-1245	Arrival
18 Jan 19	1245-1300	Site Safety Induction
	1300-1530	Site Activity
	1530-1600	Clear Loose & Pack-Up
Saturday	0800-0830	Arrival
19 Jan 19	0830-0845	Site Safety Induction (for new arrivals)
	0845-1015	Site Activity
	1015-1045	Tea-Break
	1045-1215	Site Activity
	1215-1315	Lunch
	1315-1530	Site Activity
	1530-1600	Clear Loose & Pack-Up
Sunday	0800-0830	Arrival
20 Jan 19	0830-0845	Site Safety Induction (for new arrivals)
	0845-1015	Site Activity
	1015-1045	Tea-Break
	1045-1215	Site Activity
	1215-1315	Lunch
	1315-1530	Site Activity

1530-1600 Clear Loose & Pack-Up

5. **Visitors**. The site will be open to visitors throughout the duration of the excavation.

6. **Welfare**.

a. There are no on-site toilet facilities. The nearest public facilities are at Harvest Services by Junction 13 on the A14 and Alconbury Weald (see Attachment 1).

b. Participants should bring their own food and drinks, or be prepared to purchase from nearby commercial outlets (Alconbury or Huntingdon). Participants should also bring additional water or other drinks as excavation and other archaeological field work is physically demanding that, despite the time of year, requires regular rehydration.

c. Participants should wear sturdy and comfortable outdoor clothing and footwear (walking boots, steel capped boots, Doctor Martens boots, wellington boots, etc). Layered clothing allows for personal comfort to be maintained as weather conditions change. Waterproof jacket (with hood) and trousers should also be brought as excavation will continue during showers and light rain.

d. Participants may wish to bring other items for personal comfort, such as; small camping chair to sit on during breaks and lunch, kneeler or knee pads, gloves, hat, scarf.

e. Participants are responsible for bringing any medication they will need and for having an up-to-date tetanus inoculation (refer to your doctor or surgery nurse if in any doubt).

7. **Archaeological Equipment**. All excavation, recording and finds processing equipment will be provided by SHS. However, please feel free to bring your own equipment.

8. **Insurance**. SHS insurance includes Public Liability and small personal accident cover. JIGSAW affiliates participating under their group/society insurance are to provide confirmation of the Public Liability and small personal accident cover provided. Those taking part who may wish to consider their own personal accident insurance should seek advice from an insurance company beforehand to ensure the correct type and level of insurance is purchased.

9. **Excavation Strategy**. This is the first season of archaeological excavations on Hill Top, the aim of which is to test theories developed from analysis of recent geophysical and field walking surveys:

a. **Evaluation Trench**.

(1) In Session 1, a 15m x 2m evaluation trench was opened on a north/south long axis in site grid squares 3-A and 3-B as indicated on Attachment 2. The purpose of the evaluation in Sessions 1 and 2 was to:

(a) Investigate the strong high resistance mass anomaly in site grid square 3-B.

(b) Investigate the low resistance are to the immediate north of the high resistance anomaly.

(c) Investigate the magnetometry anomaly indicative of a ditch in grid square 3-A that bounds the north edge of the high resistance mass.

(d) Determine any relationships between the anomalies through dating evidence, any truncations and assemblages.

(2) In Session 3, the evaluation will continue to:

(a) Investigate the strong high resistance mass anomaly in site grid square 3-B identified as building rubble, specifically; the variances in building rubble composition and possible structural evidence.

(b) Investigate the magnetometry anomaly confirmed as a ditch in grid square 3-A in order to determine its form, size and purpose.

(c) Investigate whether there is any relationship between the building rubble and ditch.

(d) Investigate and record the medieval ridge and furrow revealed at the north end of the trench.

b. **Location**. As indicated on Attachment 2.

c. A summary of sessions 1 and 2 can be found at Attachment 3.

d. Additional photos and Google Earth image of the site with site grid overlain can be found at Attachments 4 and 5.

10. **Attachments**. There are three attachments to this information leaflet:

a. Attachment 1 - Google Earth image of Hill Top and surrounding area relative to the village of Alconbury Weston, the area known as Alconbury Hill and the A1(M), with site entrance marked, and Harvest Services at Junction 13 of the A14 opposite Alconbury Weald identified.

b. Attachment 2 - Google Earth image showing Hill Top with the location of trench 1 and site grid squares 3-B into 3-A highlighted.

c. Attachment 3 - A summary of Sessions 1 and 2 in the form of a 'dig diary'.

HILL TOP, ALCONBURY WESTON 2018
SAWTRY HISTORY SOCIETY EXCAVATION
'DIG' DIARY

Site Location

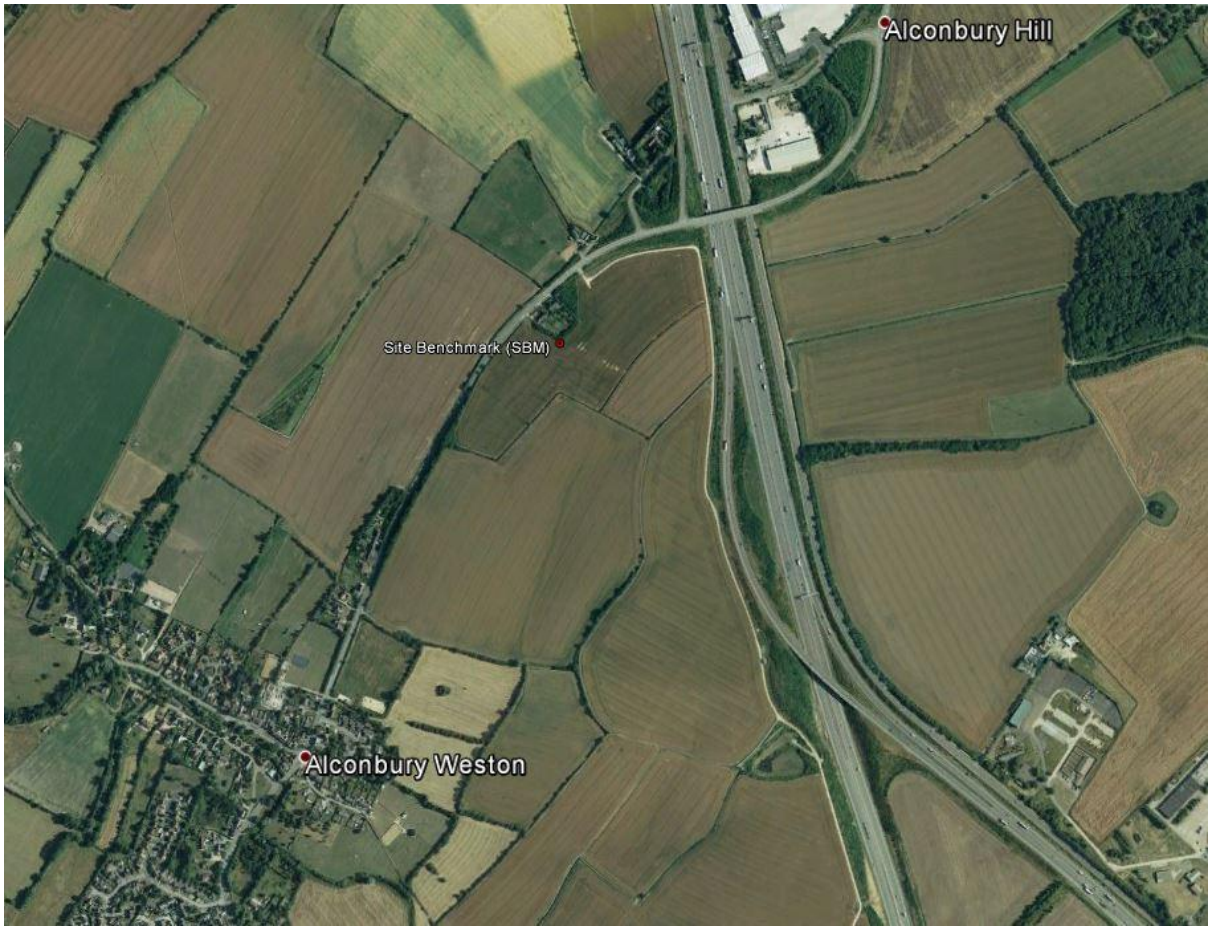

Figure 1 - Site Location

Aims and Objectives

Project: Romano-British Settlement on Hill Top
Season: 02
Open a 15m x 2m evaluation trench with long axis aligned north-south in the site grid squares highlighted in Figure 2. The purpose of this evaluation is to:
- investigate a strong high resistance mass anomaly in the southern of the highlighted site grid squares
- investigate a low resistance area to the immediate north of the high resistance anomaly
- investigate a magnetometry anomaly indicative of a ditch that bounds the north edge of the high resistance mass in the norther of the highlighted site grid squares
- determine any relationships between the anomalies through dating evidence, any truncations and assemblages

Figure 2 - Location of Trench 1

Day 1 - 30 Nov 18

Activity

Afternoon: at the start of the afternoon session the weather was clear skies and sunny with a light breeze, the ground conditions were damp, and the forecast temperature was 10°C.

The afternoon's activity was de-turfing the trench and excavate top-soil to a depth of approximately 8-10 inches. This revealed the top of building demolition rubble at the south end of the trench and extending north for 5-8m then disappearing under the top-soil. There is evidence of localized high temperature in the SE corner above which, in the top-soil, a large concentration of tesserae was recovered. The final act of the afternoon was to straighten and tidy the trench walls ready for the next day and clear the loose.

Finds: numerous tesserae; pot sherds; various tile sherds; some hypocaust sherds.

Notes: the building demolition rubble was as predicted by earth resistance geophysical survey results which was a rewarding start.

Options: clean and level trench floor in order to determine the next excavation strategy.

Day 2 - 1 Dec 18

Activity

Morning: at the start of the morning session the weather was overcast with light squally rain and drizzle, and breezy, the ground conditions were damp and the forecast temperature was 8°C.

The morning's activity was to clean and levelled the trench floor. The building rubble was not as extensive believed and after cleaning by hand trowel became more of a compacted

Figure 3 - De-turfing Trench 1

Figure 4 - Trench 1 Looking North

clay surface with tesserae and other CBM embedded. A potential post hole was revealed close to the west wall of the trench and approximately 1.5m from the north end. Suggestions of broad bands of alternating drier frangible soil and damper sticky soil spanning the width of the trench on a southwest-northeast alignment also began to appear.

Finds: hypocaust sherds, numerous tesserae, numerous CBM, pot sherds (including nene valley wares).

Afternoon: at the start of the afternoon session the weather remained overcast with light squally rain and drizzle, and breezy, the ground conditions remained damp and the forecast temperature was 10°C.

A continuation of the morning's activity with no significant changes to the features and potential features identified during the morning.

Finds: hypocaust sherds, numerous tesserae, numerous CBM, pot sherds (including nene valley wares).

Notes: the end of day interpretation was that surface at the south end of the trench is compacted clay floor either as a base for tesserae or possibly a later floor overlaying the tesserae.

Options: continue hand trowelling from south end to determine the extent of the possible floor/compacted surface and the edge with the adjacent sub-soils.

Figure 5 - Trench 1 Looking North

Figure 6 - Trench 1 Possible Post Hole

Day 3 - 2 Dec 18

Activity

Morning: at the start of the morning session the weather was bright with scattered cloud and strong breeze, the ground conditions were damp and the forecast temperature was 12°C.

The morning's activity continued with trowelling back from south end to clear sub-soil and expose top of building rubble - comprising CBM, mortar, plaster, opus signinum and tesserae. A 1m wide slot extending 5m centrally from north trench wall was opened.

Finds: CBM (including hypocaust), mortar, plaster, opus signinum, tesserae, glass fragments, pot sherds.

Afternoon: at the start of the afternoon session the weather had become overcast with a continuing strong breeze, the ground conditions remained damp and the forecast temperature was 14°C.

The afternoon session was a continuation of the morning's activity. The top of the building rubble was noted to become deeper thereby increasing the thickness of the covering sub-soil. Excavate of the slot at the north end of the trench continued.

Finds: CBM (including hypocaust), mortar, plaster, opus signinum, tesserae, glass fragments, pot sherds.

Notes: the extent of the building rubble has continued further north into the trench than anticipated at the end of Day 2; the top of the building rubble can now be seen to be lower than the compacted clay layer at the south end of the trench, which gives a strong assumption that the compacted clay overlays building rubble.

Figure 7 - Trench 1 Looking South Over

Figure 8 - Trench 1 Looking North Along Slot

Day 4 - 3 Dec 18

Activity

Morning: at the start of the morning session the weather was overcast with a light breeze that quickly changed to drizzle with squally showers; the ground conditions were damp and the forecast temperature was 10°C.

Due to the inclement weather the morning's activities were primarily site admin - labelling trench contexts, bagging-up yesterday's finds and refining context descriptions. By late morning the weather had improved allowing for trench-work - this consisted of removing by mattock a depth of the sub-soil above the building rubble for a further 1.75m across a 1m width on the east side of the trench. The remainder of the morning was spent cleaning back by hand trowel the area cleared by mattock.

Finds: mainly ceramic building material (CBM), some larger pieces of mortar and opus signinum and a few tesserae.

Afternoon: at the start of the afternoon session the weather was overcast, which cleared to sunny intervals with scattered cloud and the occasional gusty breeze throughout the afternoon; the ground conditions were wet (due to torrential showers over lunch period) and the forecast temperature was 10°C.

The afternoon's activity was a continuation of trowelling back the area cleared by mattock in the morning.

Finds: large CBM, larger clumps of mortar and opus signinum.

Notes: the top of the building rubble sloping downwards that was revealed yesterday, now that there was a context to it, now appears to be a transition edge in the nature of the building rubble; the area to the south, that was exposed during days 2 and 3, is relatively level building rubble comprising small CBM particles, with the occasional larger piece, and numerous tesserae compacted into a soil/mortar mix; the nature of the building rubble north of this transition is of large pieces of CBM and large clumps of mortar and opus signinum with a noticeable absence of tesserae; in the northeast corner of this latest excavated area is a 'void' containing no CBM, mortar or opus signinum and in-filled with a mix of sub-soil and inclusions similar to those in the level area of building rubble (which will require further investigation); this change in the nature of building rubble could be possible evidence of a wall or traces of the wall itself.

Figure 9 - Trench 1 Looking North Over Changed Nature of Building Rubble

Figure 10 - Trench 1 Looking East Across Changed Nature of building Rubble

d. Attachment 4 - Additional photos.

e. Attachment 5 - Google Earth image of the site with site grid overlain.