

YCCART 2020/Y7

Woodspring Priory geophysical survey briefing note

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RESEARCH TEAM (YCCART)**

General Editor: Vince Russett



Wall collapse in paddock south of Woodspring Priory, January 2020. These have been exacerbated by the heavy rains of autumn and winter 2019-20

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Abstract

A licence for geophysical survey at this site was granted to run from September 2019-January 2020. The wettest autumn and winter that could be remembered rendered part of the site underwater for months. An extension of the licence was then granted to run until July 2020, but the subsequent coronavirus pandemic has led to most of the group self-isolating for as long as government guidance decrees. This means there is little or no chance that the intended works can be finished before July, hence this briefing note. In addition, we began a detailed photographic survey of the field walls at the Priory to inform the Landmark Trust's proposed repairs.

Acknowledgements

A Heritage Lottery Grant enabled the purchase, by YCCCART, of a Geoscan RM 15 resistivity meter

This survey would also not have been carried out without the willing permission of the landowner, Landmark Trust, the licensing of the work by Historic England, and the kind co-operation of the tenants of the site, the Toogood Partnership.

The authors are grateful for the hard work by the members of YCCCART in performing the surveys and Vince Russett for editing.

Introduction

Yatton, Congresbury, Claverham and Cleeve Archaeological Research Team (YCCCART) is one of a number of Community Archaeology teams across northern Somerset, formerly supported by the North Somerset Council Development Management Team.

Our objective is to undertake archaeological fieldwork to enable a better understanding and management of the heritage of the area while recording and publishing the activities and locations of the research carried out.

Site location

Land use and geology

Historical & archaeological context

Survey objectives

Please see earlier reports

Methodology

The survey of the fields was undertaken during the period September 2019 to January 2020 by teams from YCCART using a Geoscan RM-15 resistivity meter.

The completed survey was downloaded to a TerraSurveyor programme and the resultant composite adjusted using the following filters:

Resistivity

Band weight equaliser

Grad shade

Despiked

Clip SD2

High Pass filter.

The report was written in Libre Office 5 Writer.

Photographs were taken by members of YCCART, and remain the copyright of YCCART.



Fig 0: Area 5 of proposed survey, Jan 6th 2020

Results

The area proposed for survey at Woodspring in the initial licence application was as below.

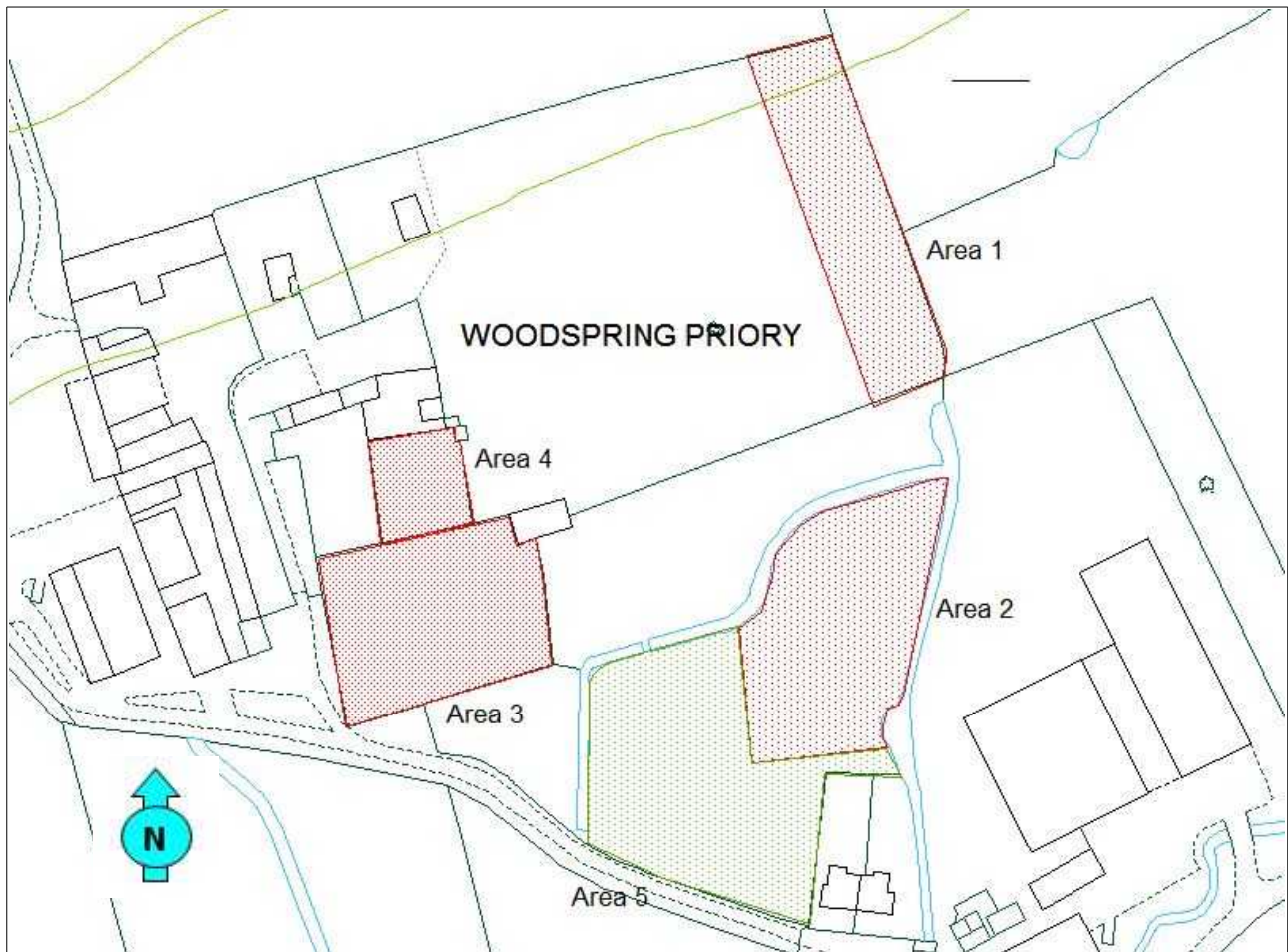


Fig 1: Area proposed for survey

In the event, only areas 1 and 3 were surveyed for reasons outlined in the Abstract above. Much of area 5 was flooded for most of the winter (see below), and the depth of the floods in the moat surrounding area 2 was such that the area was impossible to reach without a boat.

Area 1

In area 1, two visits in September 2019 served to complete the surveys of 2012-3.

The result confirmed the conclusions of that year (see Fig 3 below).

The linear walled pond A continued as far as the east wall of the orchard, where a much damaged second pond was visible in the results. Photographs from the 1940s show much of this damage was caused by the insertion of clay drainage pipes.

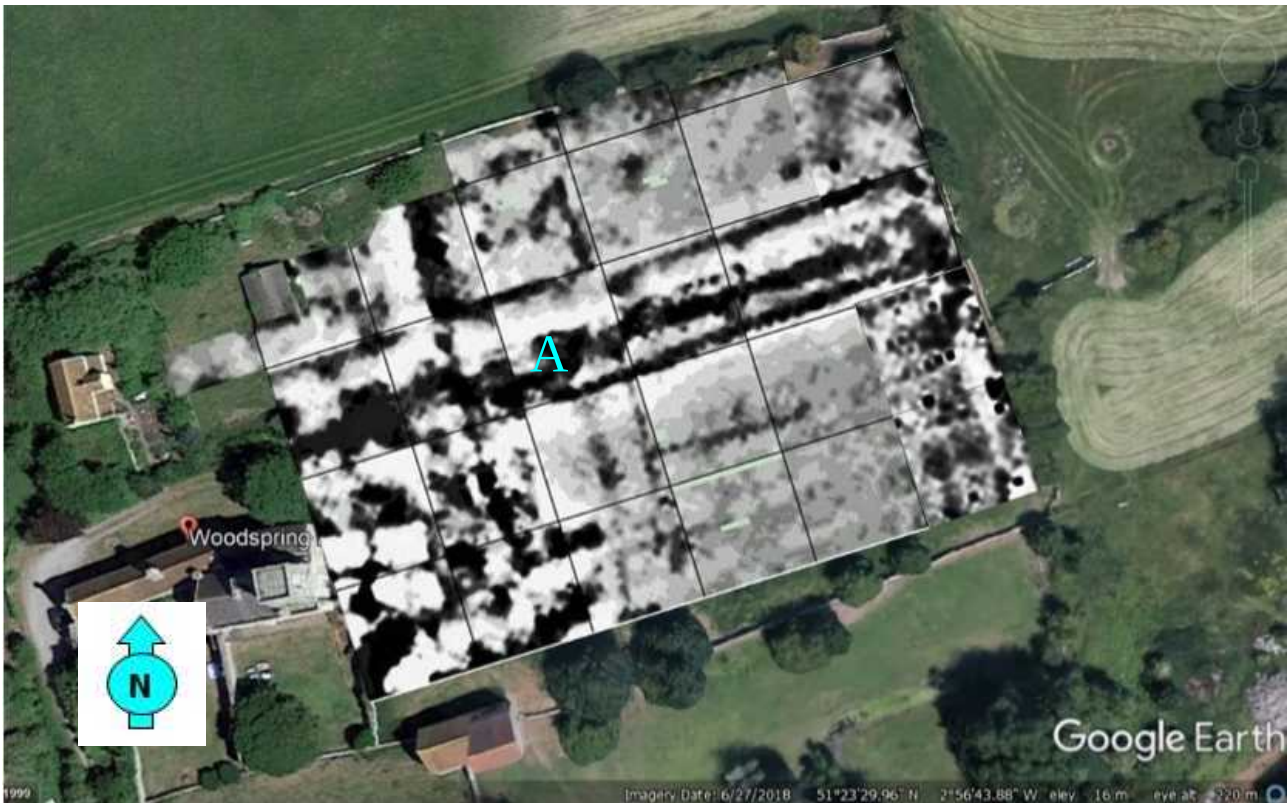


Fig 2: Completion of orchard survey (Area 1)

Although differing slightly due to soil conditions (2012: high summer; 2019: autumn), it is instructive to see how the clay drainage pipes and their backfill appeared as high resistance in summer, but low in autumn.

Area 4

This is the paddock immediately to the south of the cloister.

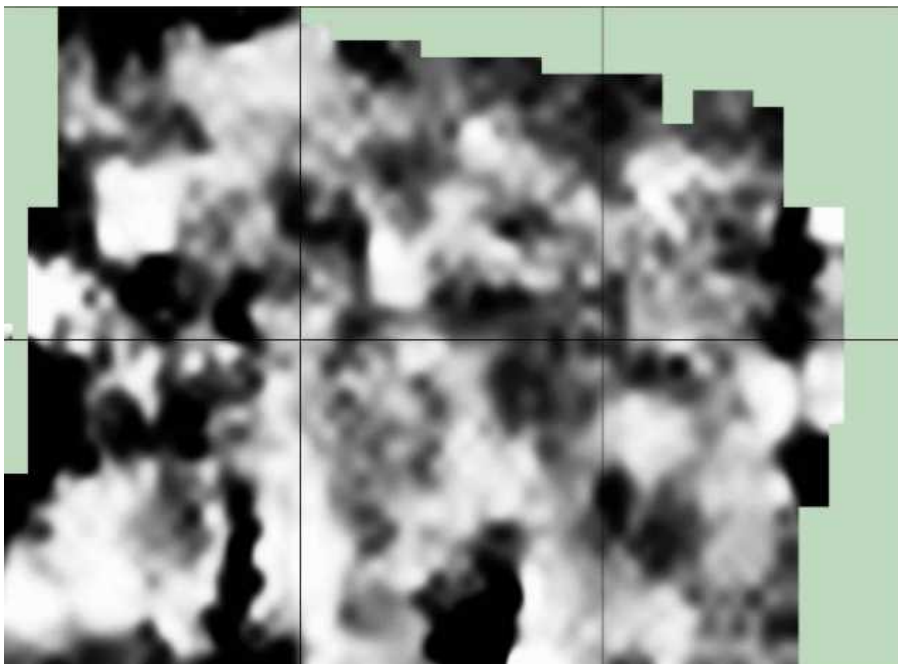


Fig 3: Resistivity survey of paddock, 2012

The 2012 1.0m x 1.0m resistivity survey showed hints of buildings, but was not clear enough to identify structures, so the 2020 survey was carried out using a 0.5m x 0.5m grid.

This proved worth the four times extra data points (Fig 4).



Fig 4: Results of 2020 0.5m x 0.5m surveyed

This uncovered a plethora of structures and responses within the paddock. Since the walls around the paddock clearly overlaid structures seen in the resistivity survey, it was next intended to extend the 0.5m x 0.5m to the south, and the grids were surveyed in, but it was at this point that the virus outbreak began. It seems premature to begin interpreting the structures without further work, but some clearly coincide with features seen in crop marks in 2013 (Fig 5).



Fig 5: Crop marks in the paddock from tower, 2013

These crop marks are in the process of being orthorectified and will obviously form an important part of the interpretation in the final report.

Finally, various members of YCCCART have collected numerous historic postcards of the Priory. One of the paddock is very significant (Fig 6 below)

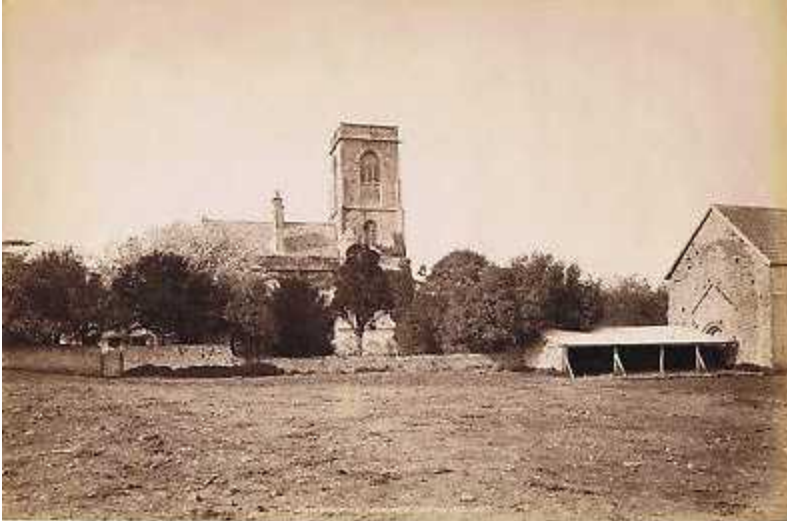


Fig 6: Post card of c1910

It is immediately obvious looking at the ground surface and the shelters provided, that this paddock was used to keep pigs before WWI, and their rotovating activities may account for some of the blurriness of the geophysical results.

In the current unprecedented circumstances, it is not clear when work will be able to start again

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