YCCCART 2021/Y1

Woodspring Priory geophysical survey briefing note 2

YATTON, CONGRESBURY, CLAVERHAM AND CLEEVE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH TEAM (YCCCART)

General Editor: Vince Russett

Initial geophysical survey results September 2020

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Abstract

A licence for geophysical survey at this site was granted to run from September 2020-January 2021. Another very wet autumn and winter rendered part of the site underwater for months. The lockdowns from the coronavirus pandemic prevented work for late 2020 and January-February 2021. This means there was no chance that the intended works could be finished before the licence for the works expired, hence this (second) briefing note.

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. I (VR) would also like to thank Chris Short for his prompt downloading and processing of all our geophysical surveys, and we are very grateful for his work.

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.

This deeply frustrating project, first at the mercy of terrible weather, then of the coronavirus pandemic, should be completed within a couple of weeks of return to the field (with licence, obviously) and the final report can then be written.

Although the survey of area 3 was largely carried out in the last licensing period, it is included here for context.

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 2020 to December 2020 by teams from YCCCART 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.

Results

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

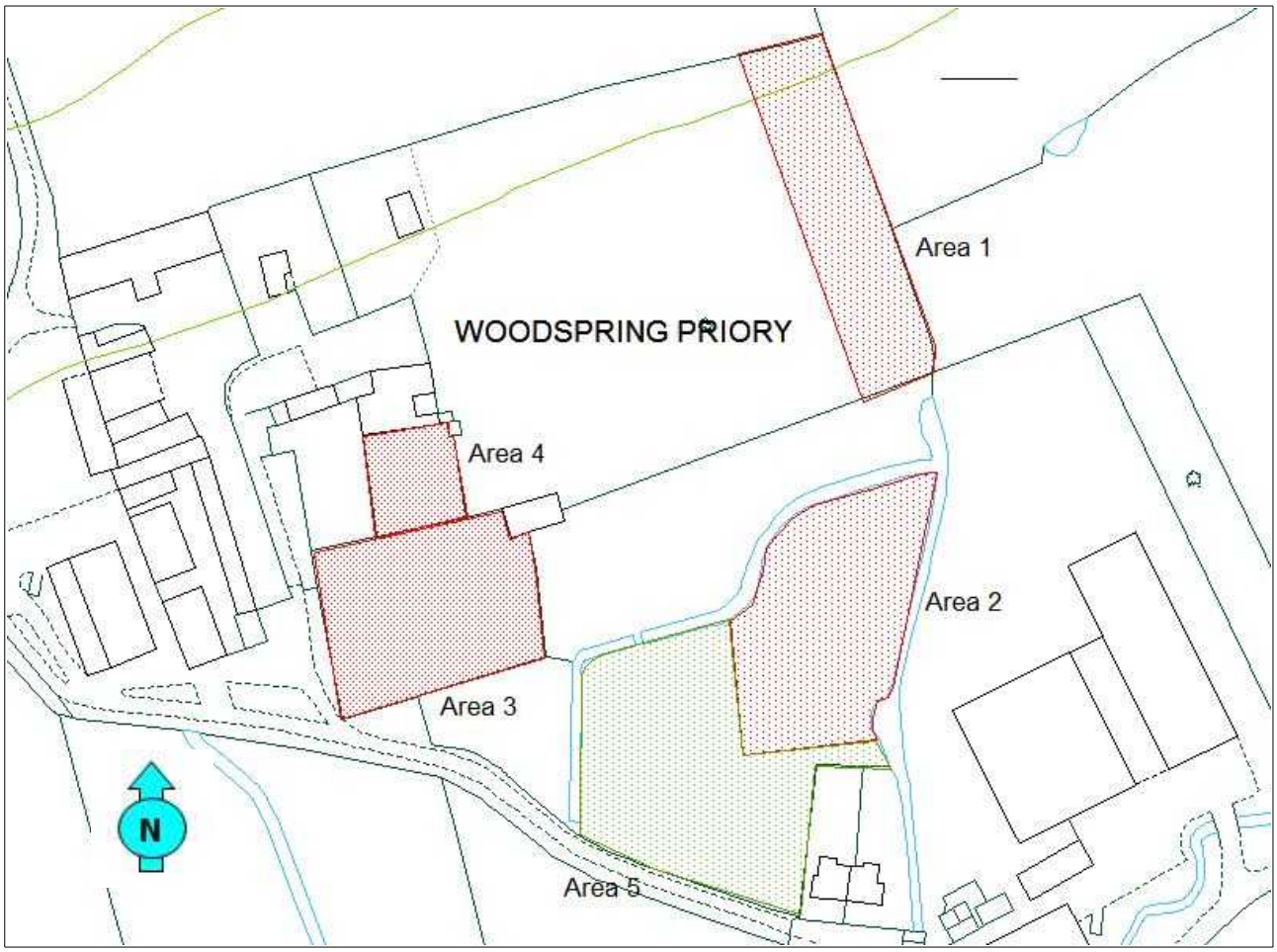

Fig 1: Area proposed for survey

In the event, only areas 3, 4 (partially) and 5 were surveyed for reasons outlined in the Abstract above. The section of field to the south of the paddock (Area 3) was also surveyed.

Much of area 5 was again 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 3 and field area to south

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

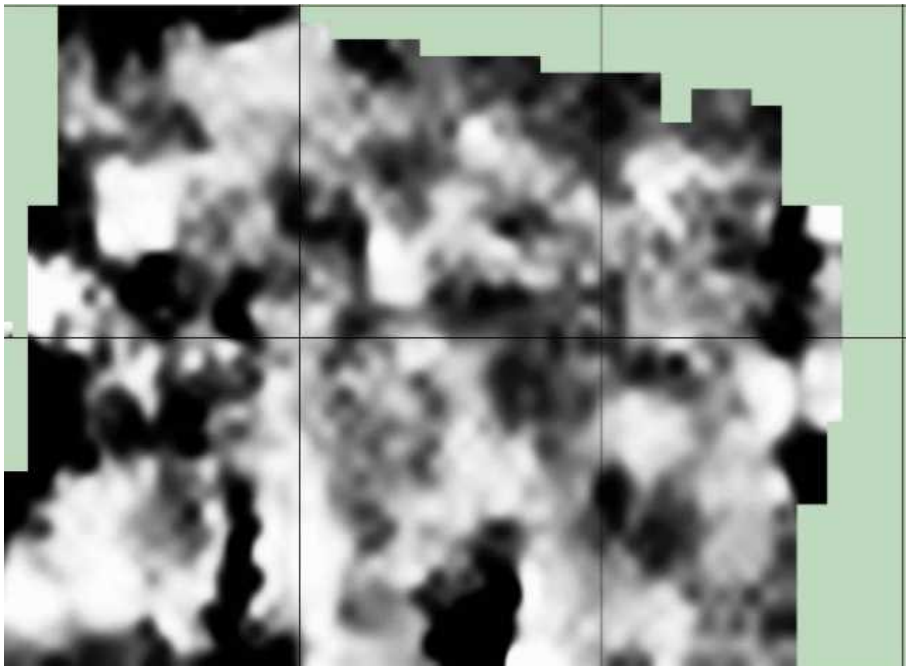

Fig 2: Resistivity survey of paddock, 2012

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 3).

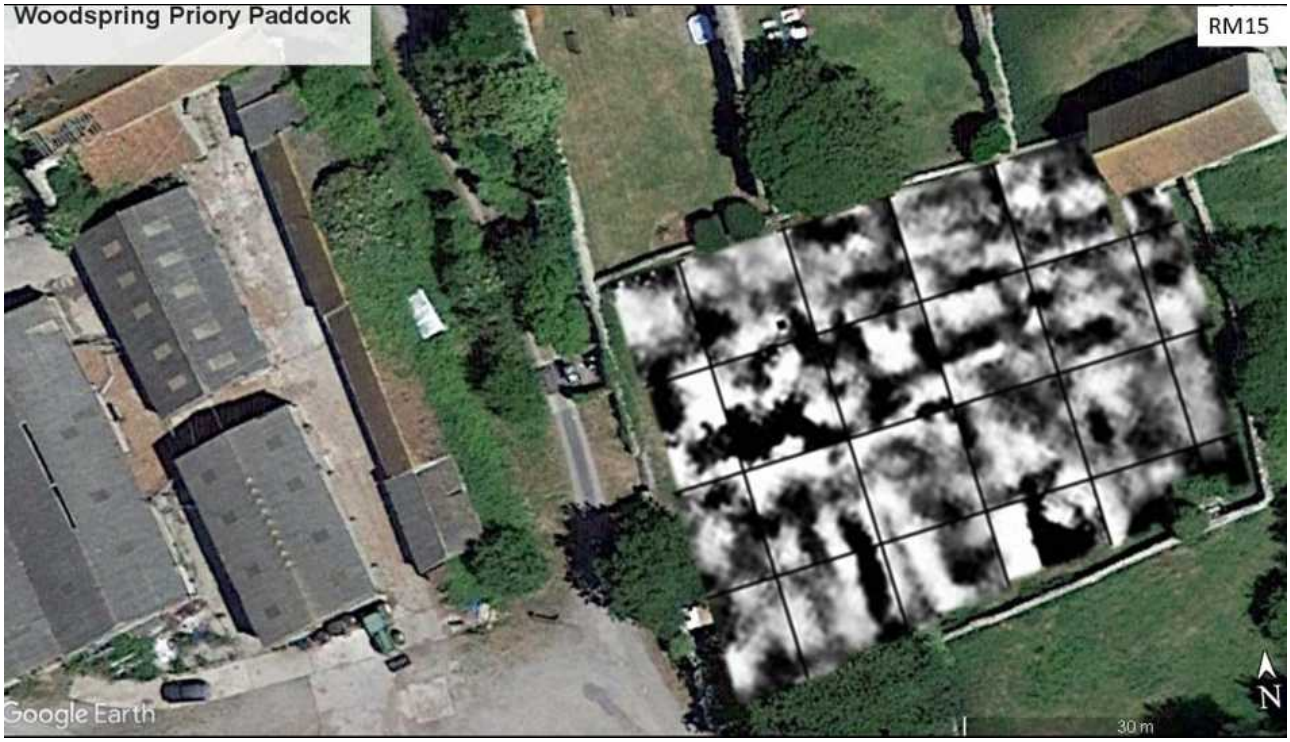

Fig 3: Results of 2020 0.5m x 0.5m surveyed

This uncovered a plethora of structures and responses within the paddock. Since the walls around the paddock clearly overlie structures seen in the resistivity survey, it was next

Fig 4: Crop marks in the paddock from tower, 2013

extended to extend the 0.5m x 0.5m to the south. It seems premature to begin interpreting the structures without further work, but some clearly coincide with features seen in crop marks in 2013 (Fig 4).

The field south of the paddock was then surveyed (again, at 0.5m x 0.5m) (Fig 5)

Fig 5: Initial results from field south of the paddock

The results are remarkably difficult to interpret on their own. Previous evidence was that a building at an angle to the south wall of the paddock, and which had a notable magnetic response (YCCCART Y12 2012) was possibly a smithy. The 2020 results (Fig 5) do not make this any clearer, but are not incompatible with the suggestion.

Putting the two areas together, however is instructive (Cover illustration and Fig 6 below).

It is clear that some features 'run under' the south wall of the paddock: watching brief on the dismantling and rebuilding of part of this wall revealed it to built to a very common technique in northern Somerset: a shallow trench is dug and large roughly squared stones laid in it, The wall is then built up off of this base.

Further analysis will be carried out to these areas, incorporating the results of the wall watching brief, and will feature in the final report.

Fig 6: Area 3 and field to the south

Area 4

A start was made on a high resolution (0.5m x 0.5m) survey of the cloister (Fig 7), but unfortunately, the current lockdown was imposed half way through the survey, so the results are partial.

The site was heavily overgrown when surveyed at 1.0m x 1.0m in 2012, and the results were pretty meaningless.

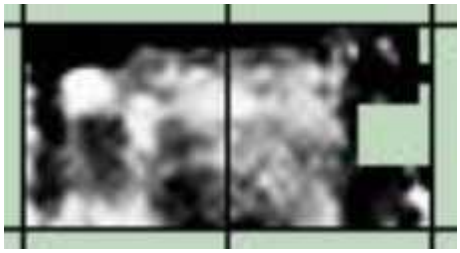

Fig 7: Survey of north half of the cloister (grids 10m)

The survey is much clearer than the one from 2012.

The high resistance along each side and the top of the survey image are presumably the hard features of the western, northern and eastern cloister walks. The central feature at the south side of each grid is the remains of a tree removed in the last few years. An intriguing feature is the 4m x 2m rectangular patch of high resistance in the western side of the first grid: unfortunately, this is probably the result of foot traffic, as a bench and seats were sited there for a number of years.

As soon as field access is permitted again, and a further licence obtained from HE, this survey will be a priority for completion.

Area 5
This survey was made at a more traditional 1m resolution, with 20m grids.

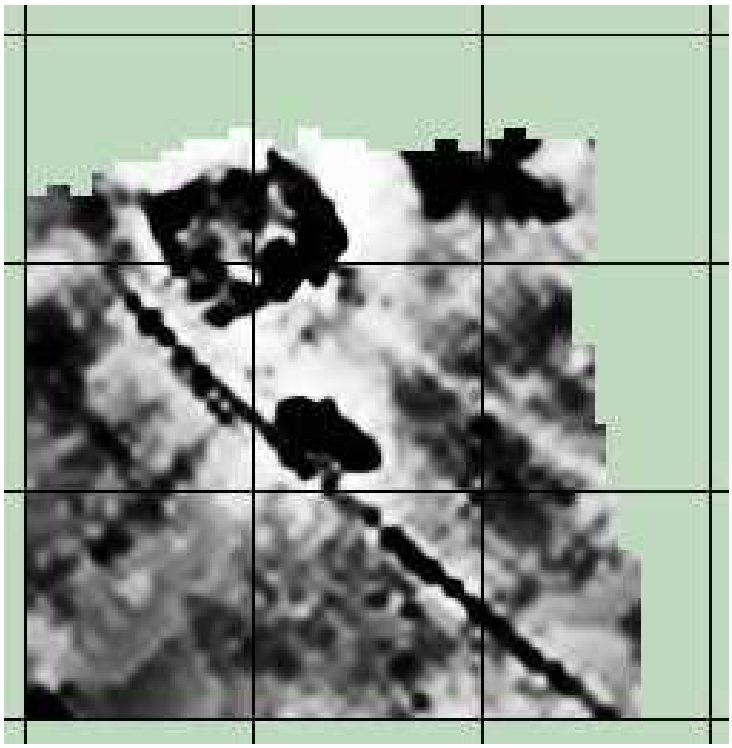

Fig 8: Results of survey in Area 5

A number of features shown on the survey can be seen to be modern. The high resistance line across the field is the slightly raised 'causeway' from the entrance gate to the priory.

This was installed by Landmark in the early 1970s (it is not on 1971 air photographs, but is present on 1975 air photos).The large rectangular patch of high resistance in the top left hand corner of the survey coincides exactly with a large fresh dump of material seen on 1991 air photogaphs, and local knowledge says there was dumping on the interior of the moat (Area 2) (*pers comm* A. Toogood).

The low resistance linear leading to the dumped area may well be a pipe running from the rear of Coronation Cottages: could this be a sewage waste pipe to the dump area, and the dump intended to seal it?

Some linear features to the bottom left of the survey may relate to earlier water management features for the water running from the orchard.

Area 2 was cleared of brambles and nettles, but the beginning of lockdown prevented any further work. This (and half of area 4) are now the only outstanding areas within the priory grounds to be surveyed.

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