

**YCCCART 2010/Y14
North Somerset HER 2010-111**

**Congresbury parish church environs: geophysical surveys and documentary
recording**

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

General Editor: Vince Russett



Taking readings from the Grad 601. Pete Wright & Susan Dugas on 13 May 2010

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Abstract

YCCCART has agreed with the Heritage Lottery Fund to undertake a project over two years, commencing May 2009 to investigate the archaeology of Cadbury hill fort and its environs. As part of this study two sites were selected in the grounds of Congresbury church. One site is to the west of the current graveyard, the other is the paddock to the east of the church.

Resistivity and gradiometry results highlight in particular an area to the west of the current graveyard with possible post holes and other features, which are worthy of further investigation via a small excavation. An opportunity was also taken to gather together and publish a number of records concerning the church and its surroundings from obscure or difficult places, to inform the surveys.

Acknowledgements

A Heritage Lottery Grant enabled YCCCART to purchase a RM15 Resistance Meter and Bartington Gradiometer 601 without which surveys could not have been undertaken.

YCCCART are most grateful to Congresbury Parish Council and St Andrews Church, Congresbury for allowing the surveys to be undertaken

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

Introduction

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

The objective of the Community Archaeology in North Somerset (CANS) teams is to carry out archaeological fieldwork, for the purpose of recording, and better understanding, of the heritage of North Somerset.

For further information, see <http://cansnetwork.co.uk>

Site location



Fig 1: Site location

Survey site 1

Survey site 2

The sites lie in the village of Congresbury, in North Somerset, at ST444672 some 12 miles south of Bristol.

Site 1. The graveyard is open to the public and the Glebe land field, although private, can be viewed from the church drive and graveyard.

Site 2. The paddock in front of the Refectory is open to the public.

Land use and geology

Site 1. The current Congresbury churchyard is on one part of the site. The other section, the Glebe land field, has been levelled and landscaped in preparation for the erection of a log cabin.

Site 2. The paddock in front of the Refectory is currently laid to grass.

The solid geology is a low knoll of Mercia Mudstone, surrounded on all sides by the alluvium of the North Marsh.

Historical & archaeological context

St Congar appears to have given his name to the village of Congresbury and there is belief that the 5th/6th century re-occupation of nearby Cadbury hill fort may have had Christian aspects and a connection with this saint (*pers comm* Mick Aston). The legend of St

Congar associates him with the village church site where the sparse remains of St Congar's 'walking stick' (the last remains of a dead yew tree) can still be seen.

In 1501 the current church was mentioned in a will as being dedicated to St Congar: in 1996 a group of eleventh century sculptured fragments were discovered by Richard Broomhead and Vince Russett at nearby Brinsea, which appear to have once been part of the shrine of St Congar, probably in the previous parish church (Costen & Oakes 2003: 281 – 309.)

The earliest written record of Christianity in Congresbury dates from around 886AD when King Alfred gave Congresbury's minster to Asser, Bishop of Sherborne, and the 1086 Domesday book records a church at Congresbury endowed with half a hide of land.

On July 11th 1215 the present church was consecrated. It was extensively altered and enlarged during the 14th and 15th centuries.

Evidence of early buildings

In addition to the church, Refectory and Vicarage there is evidence that other buildings existed within or near the churchyard as follows:

a) A free-standing chapel in the churchyard dedicated to St Michael. This was mentioned in 1503 and seems to have been a mortuary chapel. By 1548 the chapel was described as *scituate within the churche yarde ther nuwe in decay and unkevered wherin lyme is stecked, lead moltun, and such other necessarie busynes dun at the tyme of the reparinge of the paryshe churche.* (Somerset Record Society, *Somerset Chantries Survey & Rental*, Vol II, page 75)

The existence of this chapel provides further evidence of the high status of this site, since this is one of the features indicating minster status for the church (pers comm M Costen).

b) Richard Broomhead in his unpublished parish survey mentions that in 1215 'The garden on the east side of the church and the bishop's court' are noted in the charter of endowment of the newly dedicated church of Congresbury whilst in 1262, William, Bishop of Bath and Wells granted 'A croft which Stephen de Aguste, formerly vicar of the same church, held in the manor of Congresburi, between the way which leads to the cemetery of Congresburi on the north side of the church and the manse of the aforesaid William.' He considers that this latter reference suggests the bishops' dwelling (*mansum*) lay to the north east of the church (Broomhead, *in prep*).

c) The Rev John Skinner in his journal is said to have referred to a gatehouse at the church dating to the time of Edward III (1312 to 1377) (pers comm V Russett, 2007).

d) Francis Neale recorded that on 25th August 1965 when removing a tree from the corner of the churchyard extension, behind the boiler-house, (formerly said to have been a stable block) a wall was revealed which may have been associated with an earlier building. The length of the walling found was 16 feet, 9 inches. It extended in a north-south direction, virtually at right angles to the north churchyard wall, parallel to the back of the former stables, and 10 ft, away from the latter. It is said that the stable block was once larger and so the wall may be part of the original building. (Neale 1965)

Recorded Finds

Recorded finds from the church area further support early activity on this site.

1. A Roman coin of Theodora (about 292 AD) and a sherd of Saxon pottery (identified by Phillip Rahtz) were found by Gray Usher in the graveyard. (Cran1983:8 & Fowler et al 1970:23 & 48)

2. From a grave dug in 1972 Iron Age? and Roman sherds and other material were recovered. (Rahtz et al 1992:6)

3. When the Churchyard extension was created it allowed examination of sections and excess spoil from recent graves. Finds included: Romano-British and later but pre-medieval potsherds, a Pennant stone, burnt stone and animal bones, suggesting occupation earlier than the church on the low knoll at the west end of the village (Rahtz & Fowler 1972: Archaeological Review 38

4. Alex Cran in the *Story of Congresbury* (Cran 1983: 12) reports that 'A complete Saxon skull of a man about 50 years of age , along with other skull bones', was found in the churchyard when a grave was being dug in 1950. The analysis report found amongst Alex's archives in Weston-Super Mare Library gives the additional information that the skull was of a male between 45 and 60 years of age.

5. The Parish Magazine for June 1951 (page 4) states that 'Mrs Green recalls that she was told how when the boiler house was excavated for the first steam heating of the church a complete skeleton was found in a stone coffin. Under direction of the then vicar, Rev Hunt (1867-1883), the skeleton was reburied in the churchyard. The coffin seems to have been broken up to make the steps into the stoke hole'.

6. The main report of the excavations on Cadbury Hill during 1968 to 1973 (Rahtz et al 1992: 6) contains the following :

'Grave diggers reported to us in 1972 that "two skeletons" were found when digging a recent grave The " Saxon" potsherd .. had been found in one of the early graves in this row i.e. at the north end; but this does not accord with the location given to us by Mr Gray Usher, who reported it as having been found 30 yards SW of the church.'

7 In the introduction to the report of the Cadbury Hill excavation of 1968 (Fowler et al 1970: 48), it is reported that Mr Usher and Mrs Cran, wife of the Rector, also reported 'a line of skeletons' i.e. head to toe, allegedly 'Saxon' oriented east-west, uncovered between the church tower and a storage shed (old stable block) in the churchyard, i.e. west from the north west corner of the tower, when a trench was cut across the present path a few years ago. Another, oriented N-S, was found by Sue Grant when planting a tree in 2000. (pers comm V Russett 2010)

7. In 2008 a piece of pre-Conquest pottery together with human bone fragments was recovered by Vince Russett, North Somerset County Archaeologist from the spoil heap of

recently dug graves at the western of the current graveyard.

Grassed enclosure banks

Earth (presumably enclosure) banks exist within the churchyard to the south of the church (under the church wall), to the west of the church following a line from the church office to the south wall and on the eastern side of the church in front of the memorial to Farmer Hardwick. These may be early features of the minster's layout.

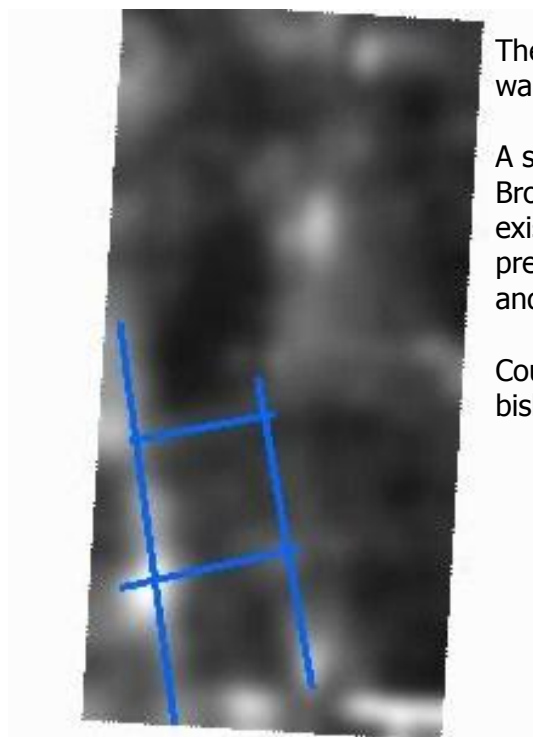
Previous YCCCART involvement

YCCCART became involved in the church when Vince Russett, North Somerset County Archaeologist, was asked to undertake a resistivity survey of the orchard beside the Refectory in advance of construction of a healing chapel.

Earlier geophysical surveys

In 2008 resistivity surveys were undertaken by Vince Russett and YCCCART which included

- 1 The open area of the current graveyard. Results have not been published but Vince has stated that a circular feature, in line with that suggested in the results section below, was evident.
- 2 The orchard beside and to the east of the Rectory.



The result of the orchard survey shows presumed walls illustrated by the blue lines.

A single evaluation trench dug by Richard Broomhead in July/August 2008 established the existence of an early 'medieval, building with well preserved archaeology sealed by minimal topsoil and subsoils.'

Could this be the foundations of the vanished bishops court mentioned in 1215?

Fig 2: Resistivity result and interpretation from earlier orchard survey

Examination of maps

The 1736 De Wilstar map was examined closely for any indications of buildings now demolished but nothing was found.

Walking the orchard/church area.

In 2008 YCCCART also walked the orchard and area around the church. Some small garden areas yielded a surprising number of finds, some medieval and structural, such as sherds of Redcliffe roof tiles and a fragment of Pennant Sandstone roof tile with its suspension hole preserved. Other finds included post-medieval domestic pottery and glass. The finds are currently in the YCCCART archive for recording.

Orchard finds

Roof tiles



Fig 3: Pennant Sandstone roof tile from the church orchard

Nine fragments of roof tile were found. It is difficult to date these, since they have been used in the Roman period and ever since, but these are probably of medieval date.

Pottery

Medieval and later pottery shards were also found including 3 pieces of 13-15th century green glazed Redcliffe Ware roof ridge tiles said by Mick Aston to have had a coxcomb ridge at their apex.

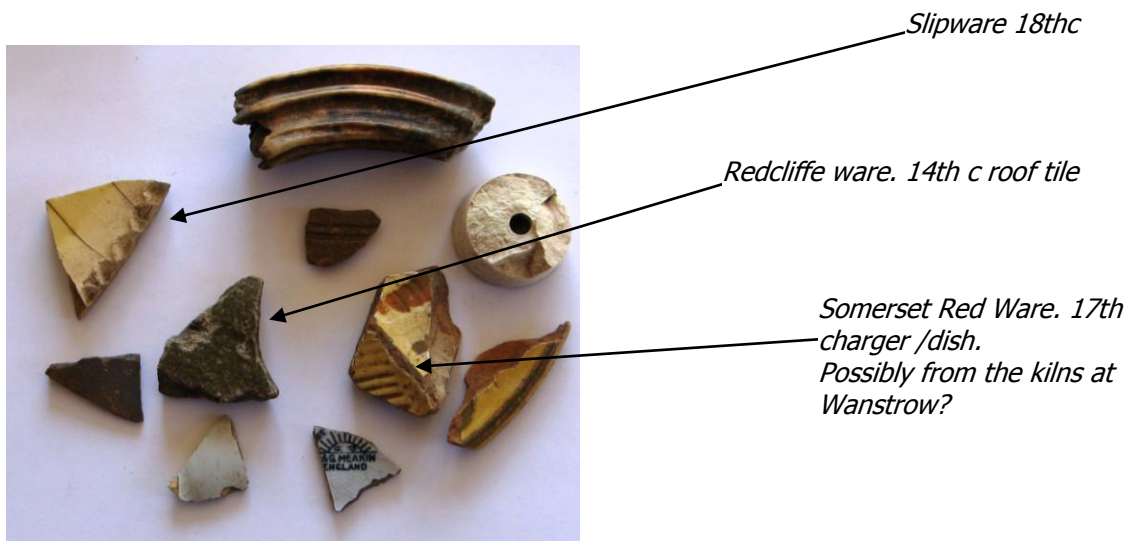


Fig 4: Pottery of various dates from the orchard garden

Church area

A number of large carved and un-carved stones were noted. However we were unable to locate Keith Gardner's 'dragon' last seen (and fortunately, photographed) by him in the church porch in the 1970s. This carved stone is probably of Romanesque date (11th - 12th century), and looks to have been a corbel. The photograph of this stone beneath is from the Keith Gardner archive.



Fig 5: Stone carving recorded by Gardner (1970's)

2010 Survey objectives

The survey had the following objectives.

- 1 To identify any features indicating lost buildings or earlier occupation of the site.
- 2 To use the survey to further train YCCCART members and members of Community Archaeology in North Somerset (CANS) in the use of the Bartington Gradiometer 601 and Resistance Meter RM15.

Methodology

Resistivity

The resistivity survey was undertaken during the period April to June 2010 by teams from YCCCART using a RM15 resistivity meter

The survey was downloaded

Using ArcheoSurveyor 2.4.0.23 and adjusted using the following filters.

- Band weight equaliser
- Grad shade
- Destriped
- Despiked
- Clip SD2

The resultant image was then adjusted in order to match grids using Microsoft Office Publisher 2007.

Gradiometry

The gradiometry survey was undertaken on 6th May 2010 (site 1) and 13th May 2010 (site 2) by teams from YCCCART using a Bartington Gradiometer 601, with settings as per the site record in Appendix 1.

The completed survey was downloaded using ArcheoSurveyor 2.4.0.23 and the resultant composite adjusted using the following filters

- 1) Colour – Black Green White & Red Blue Green 2
- 2) Band weight equaliser
- 3) Grad shade
- 4) Destriped
- 5) Despiked
- 6) Clip SD2

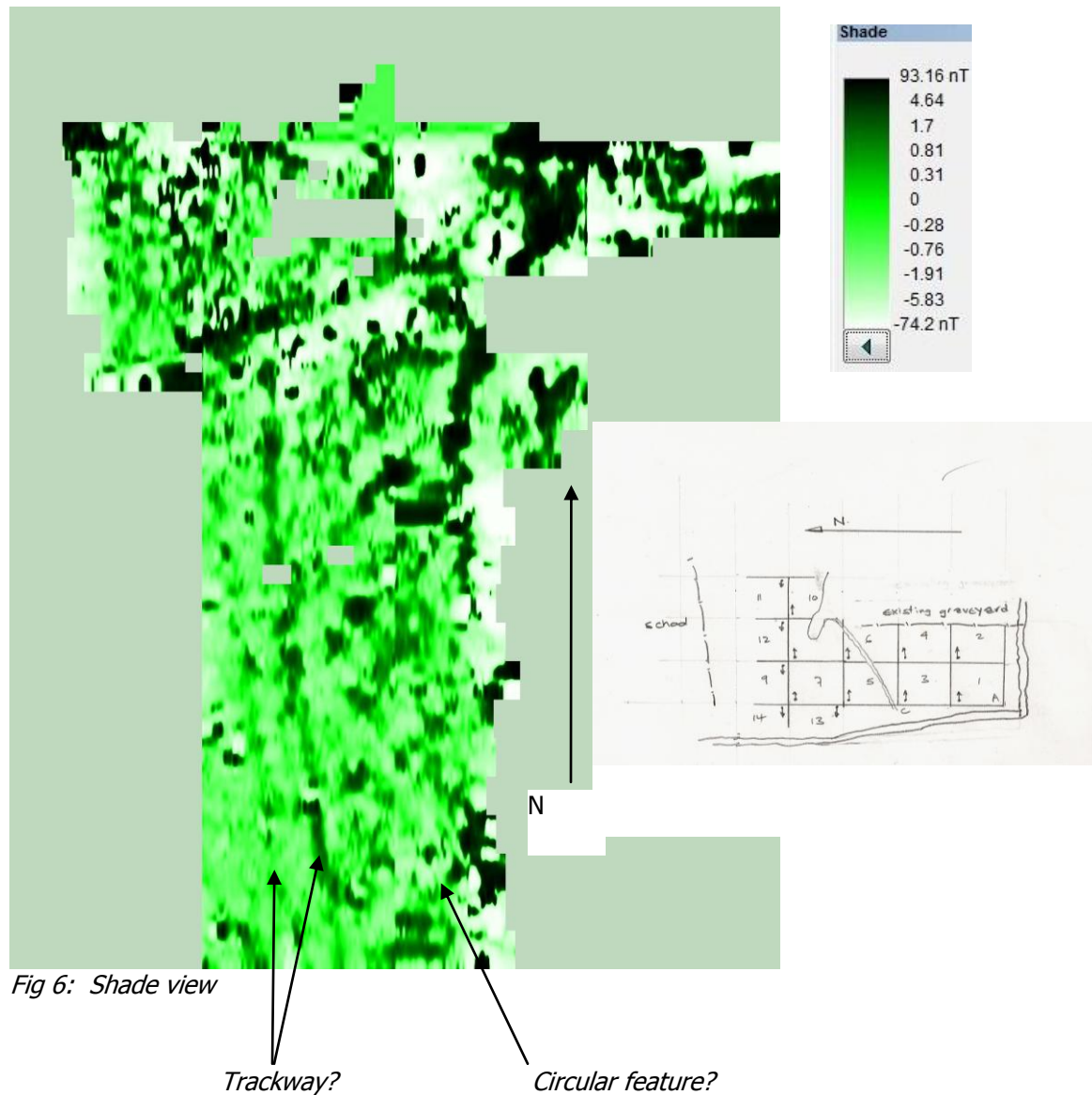
The report was written in Microsoft Word 2003.

Current photographs were taken by members of YCCCART, and remain the copyright of YCCCART.

Results

Site 1: Current graveyard / Glebe land field

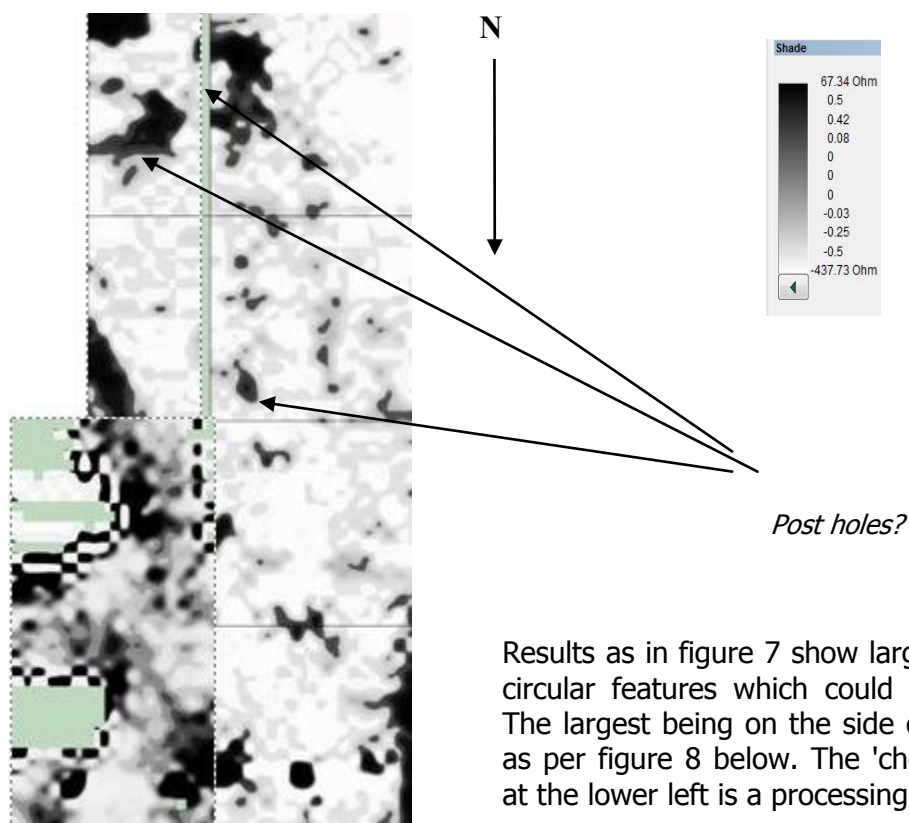
Gradiometer survey



The survey reveals a potential circular feature and possible track way between two parallel linear ditches (as per figure 6 above). A few parallel linear features running above right to lower left are probably agricultural drains.

A bungalow once stood on the area at the top of figure 3, hence the high readings and typical 'occupation noise' no doubt caused by such items as service drains, bonfires etc.

Resistivity survey



Results as in figure 7 show larger and smaller circular features which could be post holes. The largest being on the side close to graves as per figure 8 below. The 'chequered' effect at the lower left is a processing artefact.

Fig 7: Shade view

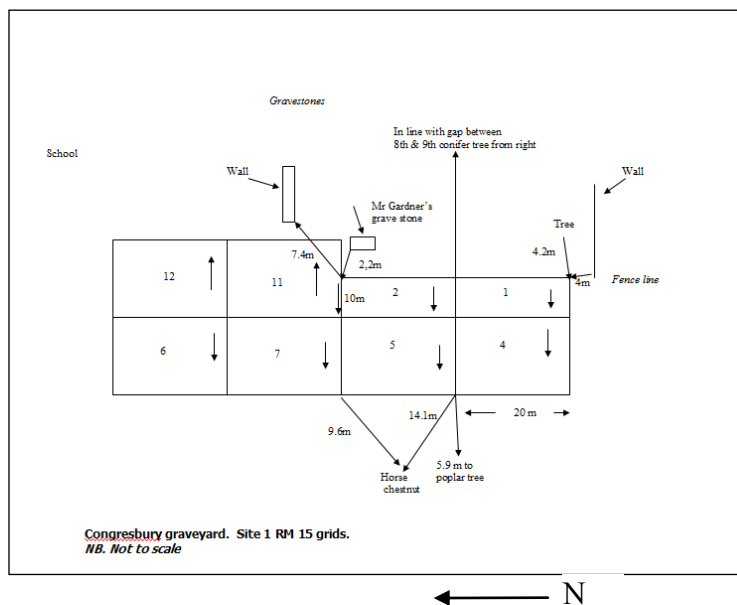


Figure 8: RM15 survey plan

Site 2: Paddock to east of the church

Gradiometer survey

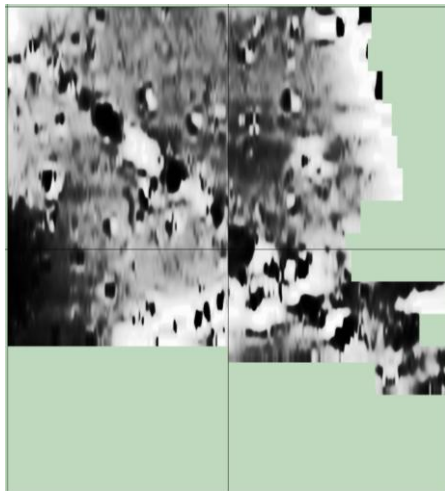
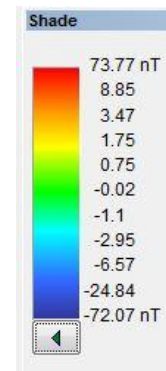
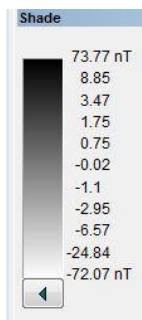
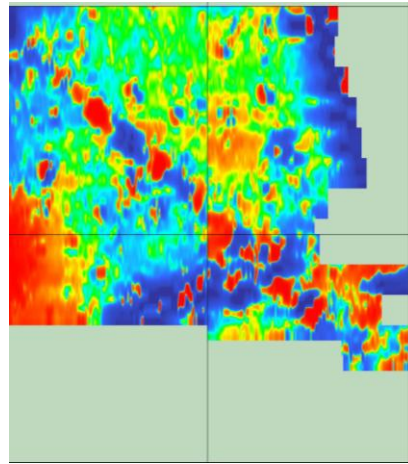


Fig 9: Shade views

N



The major feature is the obvious pipeline / cable running from bottom right to top left on the gradiometry results: the other dipoles look like waste iron or similar. The broad band of high negative response (deep blue) running from SW to NE at the north end of the site is unusual – it may be nothing more than a different pipe, but it seems rather wide for this, and could potentially be an infilled ditch, and potentially of archaeological interest, especially as it appears to share a common alignment with geophysical features recently discovered around the Refectory (*Geophysical surveys at the Refectory, Congresbury 2010 YCCCART, in prep*).

Many of the other dipoles are the common result of waste ferrous material in the soil.

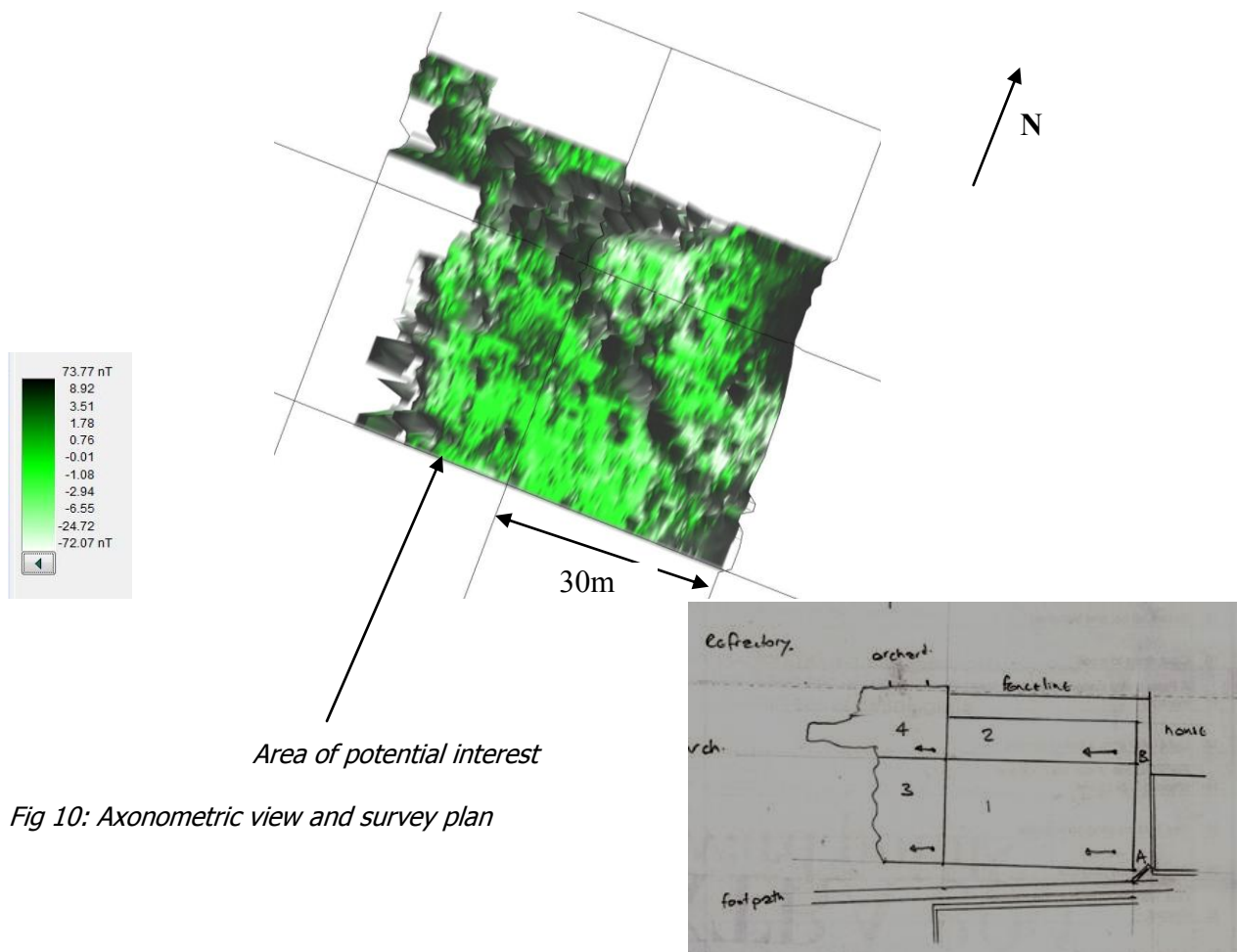


Fig 10: Axonometric view and survey plan

The area highlighted in figure 10 above of potential interest was surveyed using the RM15 resistivity meter.

Resistivity (RM 15) survey of grid 3 above

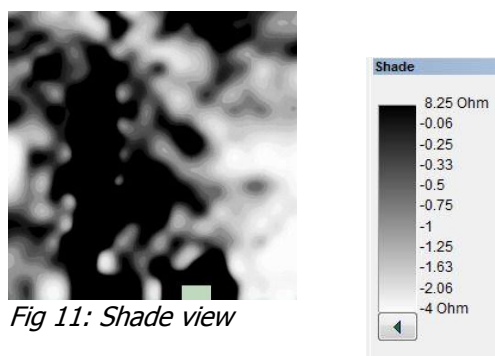


Fig 11: Shade view

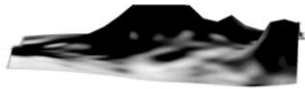


Fig 12: Axonometric view

The RM 15 survey result may be of interest. It does not show the apparent right-angle feature shown in the gradiometry results, (see figure 10, *area of potential interest*, above), which is presumably therefore a pair of magnetically enhanced negative features (pits and /or ditches) rather than stone structures.

Discussion

These results are intriguing, and clearly demonstrate (along with the forthcoming report on geophysical surveying around the Refectory itself) the potential for geophysical surveys carried out by community archaeology groups to broaden and deepen the understanding of sites thought to be already known and well understood.

The implications for the refectory site and the archaeology around and beneath it will be discussed in that forthcoming report.

For the churchyard extension, the finding of distinctive geophysical responses in areas close to where new graves are uncovering previously unknown human remains and pottery, may imply the existence of previous structures or burials, something which should really be tested by trial evaluation. The 'track way' seen on the gradiometry is intriguing since there are no obvious origin or destination for it in the current landscape.

The paddock to the east of the church is surprisingly geophysically quiet, although a potential buried ditch in the north side of the field is intriguing, since it shares an alignment with geophysical features to be published in the forthcoming Refectory report.

Recommendations for further work

In view of the anomalies found on the surveys close to the current graves in the new church yard it is recommended that a small trial excavation is undertaken before the digging of further graves destroys any feature.

References

| | |
|--|--|
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Authors: Colin Campbell & Chris Short

Date: August 2010

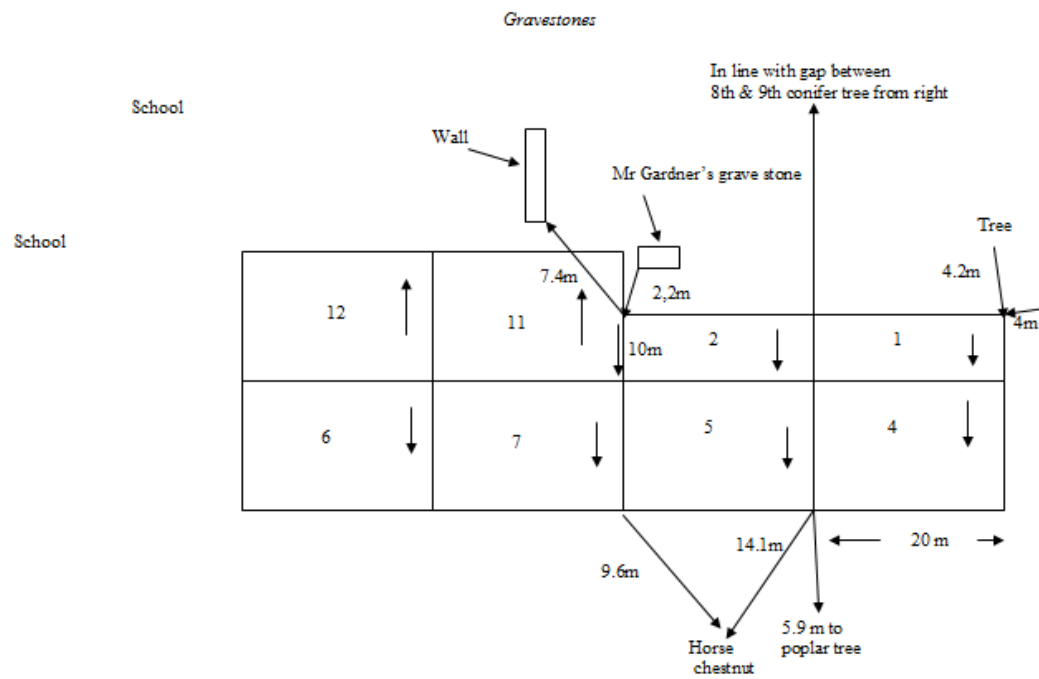
Appendix 1

Survey site records RM15 – Site 1

| YCCART Site Survey | | |
|---|---|---|
| Project – Congresbury graveyard/ Glebe field | | |
| Survey date | 1st April 2010 to 3 June | |
| Report date | June 2010 | |
| Type /Instrument | RM15 | |
| | Gain x1, Current 1mA Frequency 137Hz Probes 'Config 1' (2 probes) | Grid size: 20m x20m Pattern : Zig Zag Sample interval 1m Traverse Interval 1m. Mode Zig-Zag |
| Weather | 1 April - Mainly dry & sunny 6 May -. Dry, sunny 13May - Dry, sunny 20 May – Dry, sunny 3 June – Dry ,sunny | |
| OS Ref or Lat-Longitude | ST444/672 | |
| Site name | Churchyard extension, west of the new graves | |
| Landowner | Church/ Parish Council | |
| Tenant | none | |
| HER ref | | |
| Site type | Graveyard / open field | |
| Description | grass | |
| Period | unknown | |
| Geology | unknown | |
| Land use | none | |
| Survey team | <i>1 April - Colin Campbell, Judy Sack, Philippa Cormack, Chris Short</i> <i>6 May Colin Campbell, Dave Long, Unsal Hassan, Chris Short</i> <i>13 May - Colin Campbell, Dave Long, Unsal Hassan, Chris Short</i> <i>20 May - Vince Russett, Colin Campbell, Dave Long, Unsal Hassan, Chris Short.</i> <i>3 June - Colin Campbell, Dave Long, Philippa Cormack, Chris Short.</i> | |

| Survey area | | notes | | readings | | |
|-------------|--------------------------|---|----------------|----------|--|--|
| | | size | walk direction | | | |
| Grid ref # | 1 1 April | 20 m | SW | | | |
| | 2 1 April | 20 m | SW | | | |
| | 3a 1 April Part grid) | 20 m | SW | | | |
| | 4 6 May | 20m | SW | | | |
| | 5 6 May | 20m | SW | | | |
| | 6 13 May | 20m | SW | | | |
| | 7 13 May | 20m | SW | | | |
| | 8 20 May | 10m | SW | | | |
| | 9 20 May | 10m | SW | | | |
| | 10 20 May | 10m | SW | | | |
| | 11 3 June | 20m | E | | | |
| | 12 3 June | 20m | E | | | |
| Summary | | <p>1 April saved <i>Snuffler</i> as 1,2 & 3: <i>Geoplot</i> as conch 1, conch 2 conch 3, ArcheoSurveyor as 01apr01, 01Apr02, 01Apr03 (<i>03 not used</i>)</p> <p>6 May saved <i>Geoplot</i> as conch4 and conch5, ArcheoSueveyor as 6may01, 6 may 02</p> <p>13 May <i>Geoplot</i> saved as 6.dat and 7.dat, ArcheoSurveyor as 13May01,13may02</p> <p>20 May <i>Geoplot</i> as conch 8.dat, conch 9.dat and conch 10.dat, ArcheoSurveyor as 20May 01,20May 02, 20 May 03 (<i>Not used</i>)</p> <p>3 June saved <i>Geoplot</i> as 11.dat and 12.dat and <i>Snuffler</i> as 11 and 12, ArcheoSurveyor as 3june01, 3 June 03 (NB. 02 abandoned grid)</p> | | | | |

Site 1 –RM 15 plan



Congresbury graveyard. Site 1 RM 15 grids.
NB. Not to scale

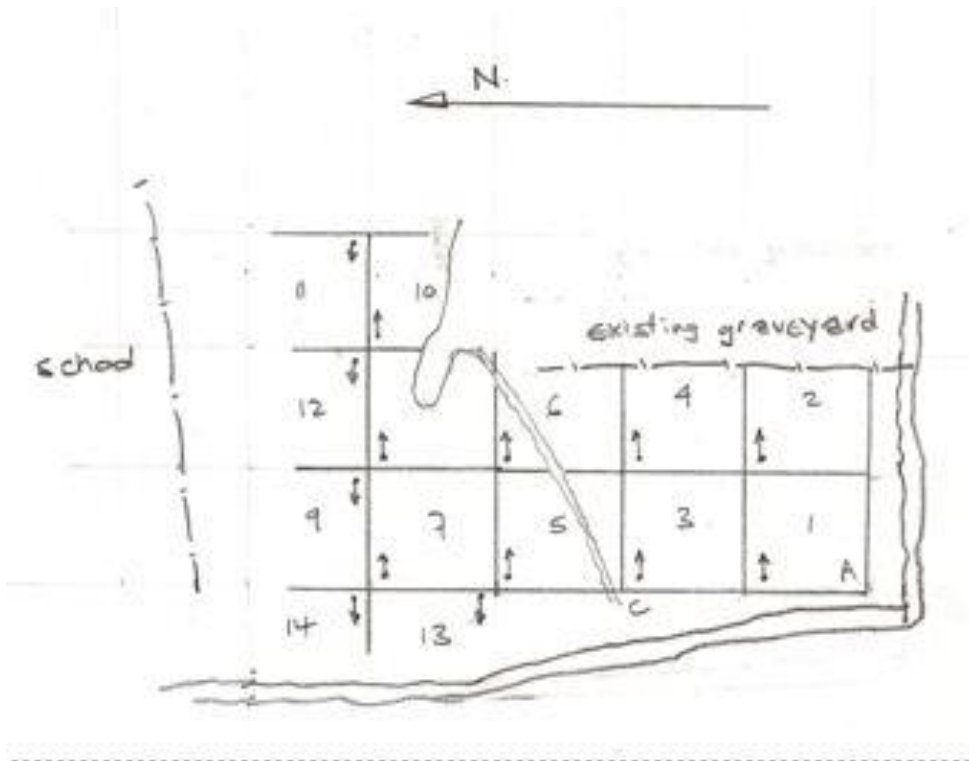
Grad 601- Site 1

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| YCCCART Site Survey Project – Church and School Environs | | |
| Survey date | 6 th May 2010 | |
| Report date | 6 th May 2010 | |
| Type /Instrument | Grad 601 | |
| | Pace :1.5m/s Start: ?? Lines/m : 1 Range:100nT Volume: High Sensors:2 | Grid size: 20m x20m Pattern : Zig Zag Samples/m:4 Audio: On Threshold:1nT Reject:50 Hz |
| Location | Station Road/Church Drive, Congresbury | |
| | A = ST 4346E 6372N N 51°22'11" W 2°48'49" | D = ST E 4346 N 66371 N51°22'11" W 2°48'49" |
| Ref | none | |
| Site name | GlebeGraveyard | |
| Landowner | St Andrews' Church | |
| Tenant | | |
| HER ref | | |
| Site type | Open field | |
| Description | Grass | |
| Period | Unknown | |
| Geology | Limestone | |
| Land use | None | |
| Survey team | Peter Wright, Peter English, Susan Dugas, Richard Baker, Mike Fox & Ian Morton | |

| Survey area | | notes | | readings | | |
|-----------------------|----|---|----------------|----------|--------|-------|
| | | size | walk direction | max | min | mean |
| Grid ref # | 1 | 20 x 20m | E | +34.8 | -26.5 | +1.7 |
| | 2 | Mirror & return | E | +99.6 | -100.0 | +1.1 |
| | 3 | 20 x 20m | E | +26.5 | -18.8 | +1.3 |
| | 4 | Mirror & return | E | +100.0 | -93.2 | -0.9 |
| | 5 | 20 x 20m | E | +100.0 | -56.1 | +0.1 |
| | 6 | Mirror & return | E | +35.3 | -100.0 | -4.9 |
| | 7 | 20 x 20m | E | +100.0 | -47.8 | -6.1 |
| | 8 | Mirror & return | E | +100.0 | -64.3 | -7.6 |
| | 9 | Mirror & return Incomplete grid | W | +100.0 | -100.0 | -41.2 |
| | 10 | Mirror & return Incomplete grid | E | +99.7 | -20.8 | +21.8 |
| | 11 | Mirror & return Incomplete grid | W | +100.0 | -100.0 | +7.4 |
| | 12 | Mirror & return Incomplete grid | W | -100.0 | +100.0 | -33.4 |
| | 13 | Mirror & return | W | +98.7 | -58.4 | -6.1 |
| | 14 | Mirror & return Incomplete grid | W | +99.9 | -70.5 | -23.5 |
| Summary | | 14 # grids completed Weather: light drizzle Survey completed | | | | |
| Ian Morton 06/05/2010 | | Version 1 | | | | |



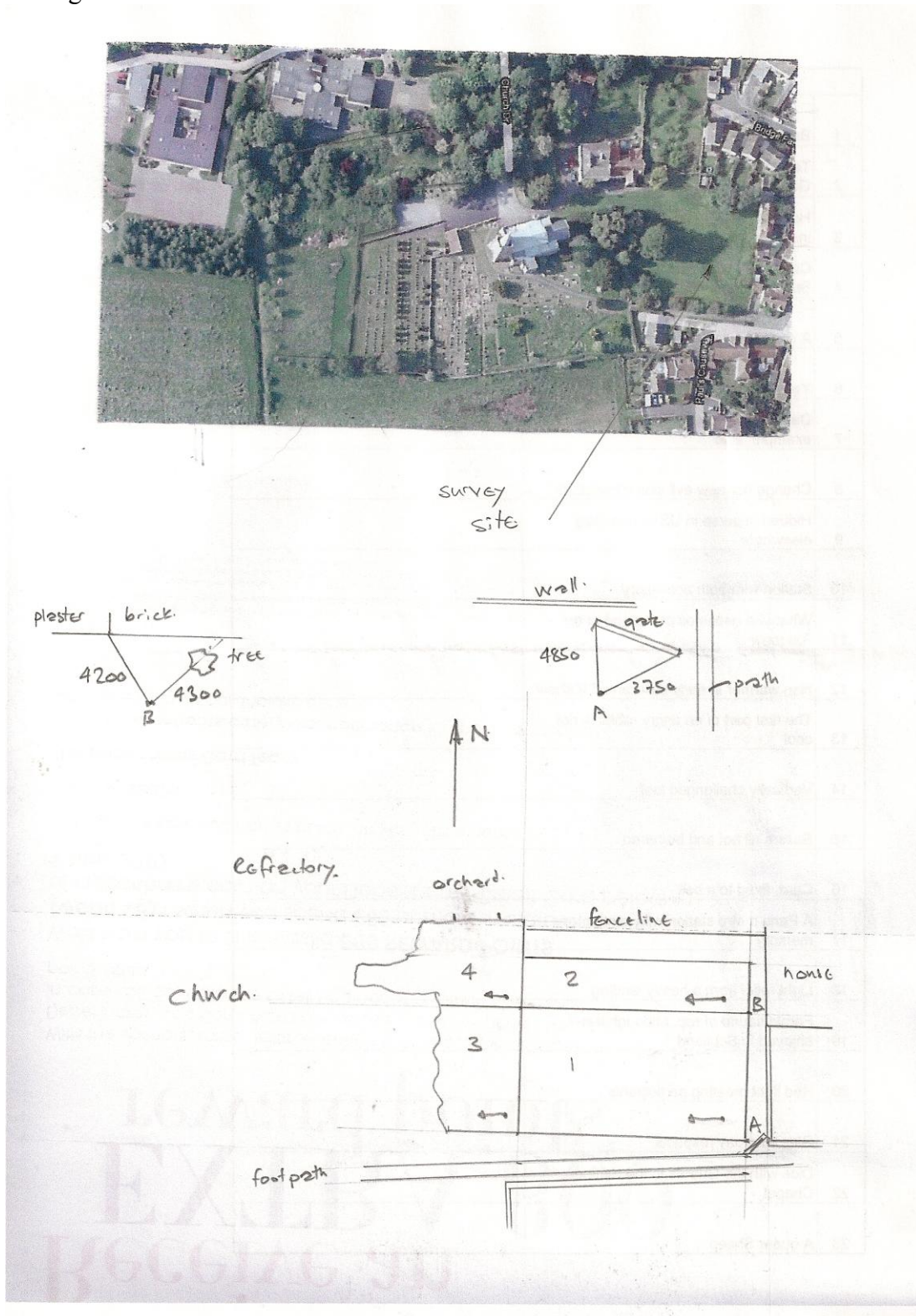
Survey site



Grad 601 - Site 2

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|---|---|--------|----------------|--|---|-----|------|
| YCCART Site Survey Project – Church and School Environs | | | | | | | | | |
| Survey date | | | 13 th May 2010 | | | | | | |
| Report date | | | 13 th May 2010 | | | | | | |
| Type /Instrument | | | Grad 601 | | | | | | |
| | | | Pace :1.5m/s Start: ?? Lines/m : 1 Range:100nT Volume: High Sensors:2 | | | | Grid size: 30m x30m Pattern : Zig Zag Samples/m:4 Audio: On Threshold:1nT Reject:50 Hz | | |
| Location | | | Station Road/Church Drive, Congresbury | | | | | | |
| | | | A = ST 4379E 6372N N 51°22'11" W 2°48'32" | | | | B = see setting out diagrams page 3 | | |
| Ref | | | none | | | | | | |
| Site name | | | Paddock by Refectory | | | | | | |
| Landowner | | | St Andrews' Church | | | | | | |
| Tenant | | | | | | | | | |
| HER ref | | | | | | | | | |
| Site type | | | Open field | | | | | | |
| Description | | | Grass | | | | | | |
| Period | | | Unknown | | | | | | |
| Geology | | | Limestone | | | | | | |
| Land use | | | None | | | | | | |
| Survey team | | | Peter Wright, Susan Dugas, Mike Fox & Ian Morton | | | | | | |
| Survey area | | | notes | | | | readings | | |
| | | | size | | walk direction | | max | min | mean |
| 1 | 30 x 30m | W | +100.0 | -100.0 | -1.3 | | | | |
| 2 | Incomplete grid | W | +100.0 | -100.0 | -2.6 | | | | |
| 3 | Mirror & return | W | +100.0 | -100.0 | -12.3 | | | | |
| 4 | Incomplete grid Mirror & return | W | +100.0 | -100.0 | -8.8 | | | | |
| Summary | | | 4 # grids completed Weather: warm and dry Survey completed | | | | | | |
| Ian Morton 13/05/2010 | | | Version 1 | | | | | | |

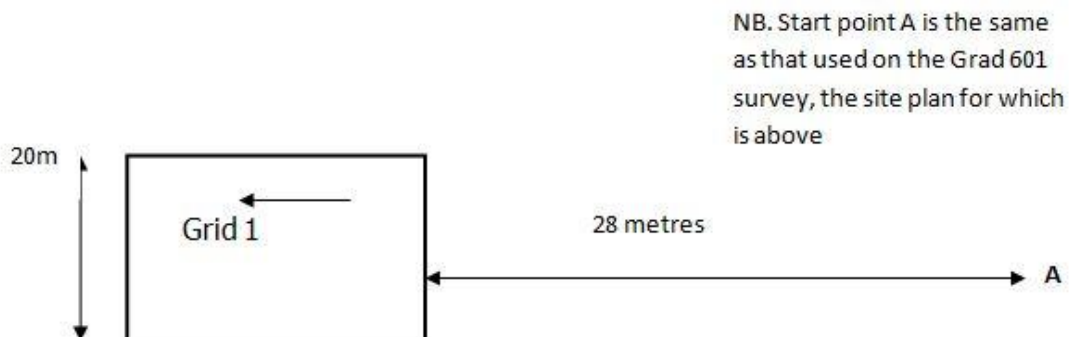
Setting out details



RM 15 Site 2

| YCCART Site Survey | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|----------------|--|---|--|
| Project – Congresbury Church Paddock | | | | | | |
| Survey date | | 10 June 2010 | | | | |
| Report date | | 10 June 2010 | | | | |
| Type /Instrument | | RM15 | | | | |
| | | Gain x1, Current 1mA Frequency 137Hz Probes ‘Config 1’ (2 probes) | | | Grid size: 20m x20m Pattern : Zig Zag Sample interval 1m Traverse Interval 1m. Mode Zig-Zag | |
| Weather | | Dry, sunny . | | | | |
| OS Ref or Lat-Longitude | | A = ST 4379E 6372N N 51°22’11” W 2°48’32 | | | | |
| Site name | | Congresbury Paddock | | | | |
| Landowner | | Church | | | | |
| Tenant | | none | | | | |
| HER ref | | | | | | |
| Site type | | Paddock | | | | |
| Description | | Grass | | | | |
| Period | | ? medieval | | | | |
| Geology | | unknown | | | | |
| Land use | | Used for events only | | | | |
| Survey team | | Pete Wright, Mike Fox, David Long, Philippa Cormack, Chris Short | | | | |
| Survey area | | notes | | | readings | |
| | | size | walk direction | | | |
| Grid ref # | 1 | 20 m | E to W | | | |
| Chris Short 10 June 2010 | | | | | | |

RM15 CONGRESBURY CHURCH PADDOCK



Appendix 2. Site photographs



YCCCART members giving schoolchildren from St Andrew's school, Congresbury hands on experience in identification Congresbury Romano-British pottery on the Glebe land field (Part of site 1).



Colin Campbell and Brian Bradbury, with the RM 15, in the current graveyard. (Part of site1)