Congresbury Church - Orchard & Vicarage

YCCART v trees. Congresbury orchard/prayer garden
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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 the orchard / prayer garden to the east of the Old Refectory and the area surrounding the vicarage were selected in the grounds of Congresbury church for geophysical study.

Results of the resistivity surveys clearly support the documentary and previous archaeological evidence that substantial building or buildings, larger than those extant, have existed in the past. The alignment of survey features suggestive of walls is similar to that of the now demolished wing of the Old Refectory as shown in the 1823 plan.

Gradiometry surveys were inconclusive.

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 and to Richard Broomhead and St Andrews Church, Congresbury for allowing us to publish a selection from the 2008 evaluation report.

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

The prayer garden / orchard is adjacent to the Grade1 listed 'Refectory', which itself is attached to the 19th century vicarage (built 1824). The survey in the rear garden of the vicarage, is separated from the orchard survey by about 7 meters and a high stone wall.

The final Grad 601 survey was in the garden area to the west and south west of the current vicarage.
**Land use and geology**

The prayer garden / orchard and the vicar’s garden are part of the land used for ecclesiastical purposes.

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

(Please see the report Congresbury Church Y14 for full details regarding possible buildings and finds around the church area).

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. Also that 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.' (Broomhead, in prep).

Orchard/Prayer Garden resistivity survey 2008

Fig 3: Resistivity result from orchard survey

The result of a previous YCCCArt orchard survey (Fig 3 above) shows presumed walls illustrated by the blue lines.

A single evaluation trench dug by Richard Broomhead in July/August 2008 (see Figs 4 & 5 below) established the existence of an early 'medieval, building with well preserved archaeology sealed by minimal topsoil and subsoils'. (Broomhead, R.A.: 2008). Could this be the foundations of the vanished bishops court mentioned in 1215?
Fig 4: Location of evaluation trench

Fig 5: Trench detail showing walls (of potential building).
Walking the orchard.

In 2008 YCCCART also walked the orchard and area around the church

Orchard finds included:

A) Roof tiles

Figure 6: Pennant stone roof tile from the church orchard

Nine fragments of roof tile were found, identified by Prof. Mick Aston as Pennant Sandstone of the medieval period.

B) Pottery

Medieval and later pottery shards were also found including 3 pieces of 13-15th century green glazed Redcliffe Ware roof ridge tiles, which often sported a coxcomb crest.
**Refectory**

The Refectory is a grade I listed building officially dated as c 1446, although it has been suggested that the porch dates to 1465. From the 15th to the 20th century each Congresbury vicar lived here. In 1634 there in addition to the vicar's house there was a stable, dovecote, garden and backside all contained in two acres (Bedingfield 2003:4).

In 1823 Joseph Haythorne was appointed vicar and immediately applied for the old vicarage to be rebuilt as it was 'so old and in every respect so low, damp and incommodeous as to render it impossible to reside therein with any degree of comfort.' Part of the vicarage was subsequently pulled down and the present vicarage of late Georgian style, attached to the Refectory, was completed by April 1824. (Cran 1983:135). The 1665 Hearth tax records reveal that the building had ten hearths. Only three are shown on the ground floor of the 1823 plan.

![Fig 8:1823 Plan of Refectory. Copied by Gill Bedingfield from original in Somerset Record Office, SRO D/P.con 3/4/2.](image-url)
**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 YCCCAT members and members of Community Archaeology in North Somerset (CANS) in the use of the Bartington Gradiometer 601 and Resistance Meter RM15.

**Methodology**

**A) Resistivity**

The resistivity survey was undertaken during the period April to June 2010 by teams from YCCCAT 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 data were also interpreted using Snuffler software as follows:

1) Despiked
2) Interpolated in two directions.

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

**B) Gradiometry**

The gradiometry survey was undertaken on 6th May 2010 (site 1) and 13th May 2010 (site 2) by teams from YCCCAT 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 YCCCAT, and remain the copyright of YCCCAT.
Results

RM 15 Orchard/Vicarage

Fig 9: Resistivity results of Vicarage back garden (left) & orchard (right). Snuffler imaging

The resistivity results by both Snuffler (Fig 9) and ArcheoSurveyor (Fig 10 below) imaging showed clear evidence of major linear anomalies (white areas in fig 9 & 10 and black areas in fig 11 & 12) consistent with wall structures aligned approximately NW-by-N to SE-by-S, and several minor ones at right angles to these. It is noticeable that the alignment of this possible building is very close to that of the (now demolished) vicarage rooms shown in the 1823 floor plan. (Fig 10 below)
Fig 10: Combination of Google Earth, 1823 map and superimposed resistivity results from Snuffler
Fig 11: Resistivity results from Vicarage back garden (left) & orchard (right). ArcheoSurveyor imaging.
NB. Resistivity range readings for 2 grids to the right are below right. For grid on left it is below left.
Fig 12: Combination of Google Earth, 1823 map and superimposed resistivity results from ArcheoSurveyor
The gradiometry results (Fig. 13) show areas of considerable signal variation but without an obviously discernible pattern.

Please note the survey area shape is irregular because of the presence of trees and undergrowth.
The gradiometry results (Fig.14) again show areas of considerable signal variation but without an obviously discernible pattern, except for a weak linear anomaly broadly parallel to several of the resistivity features apparent in the garden and orchard, which could conceivably represent a ditch or drain in the complex.

All grids are probably badly affected by metal from a shed and service pipes to the vicarage.
Discussion

These results, for the first time, reveal the extent of the surviving archaeology of the buildings on the site before the Refectory was built.

From both Broomhead’s parish survey (Broomhead, in prep) and his evaluation trench (see p. 7 above) it is clear that the footings of the buildings only seem to remain to one, or possibly two courses, and the clarity of the images also implies this, since this means there are no heaps of rubble to obscure the lines of the walls. Broomhead’s evaluation also established that some of the walls were internally plastered, implying a high status building at the southern end of the orchard.

YCCCArt’s subsequent geophysical surveys (especially the resistivity surveys) have revealed very clear linear high resistance anomalies on the same alignment and at exact right angles to, the walls exposed by Broomhead in the evaluation, and by far the most convincing explanation is that these, too are walls.

The Refectory (which dates to the 15th century AD) clearly lies over the line of some of the walls, and on a different alignment. The walls share the same alignments as a broad area of high negative magnetic response revealed in a survey in the paddock to the east of the church. As it is 6 – 7m wide, this could represent a ditch or even a moat outside of the buildings (YCCCArt 2010/Y14 on this web site). Another linear feature was seen in the gradiometry results from a survey of a small lawn to the west of the refectory. It is most significant that the section of the refectory demolished in 1823 also shared this alignment, as does the parish church (presumably from which all the other alignments are derived). It is not entirely clear why two of the older pubs in the village (the Old Inn and the Ship and Castle) also share this alignment, unless of course, they too represent the sites of medieval buildings!
The features seen in the geophysics and recorded here are only those that are reasonably obvious, and there are hints in the data of further features on the same alignments.

One obvious question is why this alignment, which after all does respect the parish church, was abandoned when the refectory came to be built. A potential reason is the extreme deviation of the axis of Congresbury church from the 'correct' liturgical east-west alignment (and it is an interesting question why this should be so). Perhaps the opportunity was taken to begin to restore the east-west alignment as the refectory was built; after all, this was an ecclesiastical building just as much as the church. Almost certainly, the pre-existing buildings discovered in the geophysics had long gone, permission having been given for their demolition in 1391, by the Dean of Wells (Broomhead 2008: 4), so they formed no obstruction to this.

One reference in Broomhead 2008 refers to 'the way which leads to the cemetery of Congresbury on the north side of the church' and it seems entirely possible that the north west churchyard wall and the alignment of the former stables building reflect the former existence of this way. Could this (alarmingly) mean that the oldest churchyard at Congresbury was to the west, where occasionally human bone fragments emerge from 'new' grave sites?
**Recommendations for further work**

The documentary and previous archaeological evidence support the findings presented here and demonstrate the archaeological importance of the area surrounding the church.

We recommend that an archaeological management plan be compiled for the church grounds.

It is also fairly urgent that the possibility of the 'old' cemetery, being to the west of the church, be tested by trial excavation.

**References**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broomhead, R.A. 2008</td>
<td>RAB/14/08 SMR 47412 <em>The Refectory Orchard, Congresbury: An Archaeological Evaluation on behalf of Congresbury PCC</em> (unpublished report in North Somerset HER)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Broomhead, R.A. (in prep)</td>
<td><em>Congresbury, the History of a Landscape</em> Unpublished manuscript in the YCCCART archive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cran, A. S. 1983</td>
<td><em>The Story of Congresbury</em>, Redcliffe Press Ltd, Bristol</td>
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**Authors:** Colin Campbell & Chris Short

**Date:** September 2010
# Appendix 1 Survey site records

## RM15 – Orchard

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<th>Project – Congresbury Church Orchard</th>
<th>YCCART Site Survey</th>
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<td>10 June to 1st July 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Report date</td>
<td>July 2010</td>
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<td>Grid size: 20m x20m, Pattern: Zig Zag, Sample interval 1m, Traverse Interval 1m, Mode Zig-Zag</td>
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### Weather
- 17 June – Dry & sunny
- 24 June - Dry & sunny
- 1 July - Dry & sunny

### OS Ref or Lat-Longitude
- ST

### Site name
- Churchyard orchard

### Landowner
- Church

### Tenant
- none

### HER ref

### Site type
- Prayer garden / orchard

### Description
- Orchard

### Period
- unknown

### Geology
- unknown

### Land use
- Prayer garden

### Survey team
- 17 June David Long, Colin Campbell, Robert Cleland, Chris Short & Vince Russett
- 24 June. Unsal Hussan, Chris Short, Colin Campbell
- 1 July Philippa Cormack, Geoff Pearson, Colin Campbell & Robert Cleland.

### Survey area notes readings

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<td>1</td>
<td>3 x 20m</td>
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<tr>
<td>17 June</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20m</td>
<td>SW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 July</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10m</td>
<td>SW</td>
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### Summary
- Downloaded to ArcheoSurveyor: Church orchard RM 15 246, 17 June 1, 2* & 3* (grids 1-3), 24 June 1 (Grid 4)
Setting out details

- Gate
- Wall
- Cross on wall
- Tree
- Grid 1
- Grid 2
- Grid 3
- Grid 4
- Fence line
- Entrance
- Electricity box
- Refectory

Grades are 20 metre square
Gerds 2 & 3 part grids only

Congresbury church orchard/prayer garden. RM 15 grids

& 1 July 1*
(NB * Not used in report)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project – <strong>Congresbury Church  Vicarage Garden</strong></th>
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**Summary**

Downloaded to ArcheoSurveyor: Congresbury church /vicars garden/ 8Jul1
Plan – Relationship of both RM15 sites

Not to scale

Grid 1

RM 15 grid in Vicarage garden 8 July 2010

Vicarage

Plan – Relationship of both RM15 sites
### YCCCAR Site Survey
**Project – Church and School Environs**

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- Pace: 1.5m/s  Start: ??
- Lines/m: 1
- Range: 100nT
- Volume: High
- Sensors: 2
- Grid size: 30m x 30m
- Pattern: Zig Zag
- Samples/m: 4
- Audio: On
- Threshold: 1nT
- Reject: 50 Hz

**Location**
- Station Road/Church Drive, Congresbury

**Ref**
- none

**Site name**
- Orchard by Refectory

**Landowner**
- St Andrews’ Church

**Tenant**
- HER ref

**Site type**
- Orchard

**Description**
- Grass

**Period**
- Unknown

**Geology**
- Limestone

**Land use**
- None

**Survey team**
- Peter English, Mike Fox & Ian Morton

### Survey area

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**Summary**
- 2 # grids completed
- Weather: warm, dry and overcast

**Survey completed**

Ian Morton 10/06/2010

Version 1
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Summary

3 # grids completed
Weather: hot, dry and sunny
Survey completed

Ian Morton 09/07/2010
Version 1.1
Setting out details