

**YCCCART 2011/Y11
North Somerset HER 2011/145**

**Congresbury Church.
Graveyard Excavation June 2011.**

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

General Editor: Vince Russett



Examining the excavation

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Abstract

YCCCART 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. In 2010 a resistivity survey in the current graveyard revealed anomalies worthy of trial excavation. This limited excavation confirmed the resistivity results and revealed a layer of stone and rubble, the possible remains of a mortared wall and a Roman roof tile and pottery suggesting that the site is close to a Roman building of some status.

Acknowledgements

This excavation was undertaken with the help of a Heritage Lottery Grant which enabled YCCCART to purchase a Bartington 601 Gradiometer and Geoscan RM 15 Resistivity meter.

The excavation would not have taken place without the authorisation of Congresbury Parish Council, the help of their clerk Jo Duffy and Rosemary West of St Andrew's church office.

YCCCART are most grateful to Steve Tofts for agreeing to be Site Director.

The authors are also grateful for the hard work by the members of YCCCART in performing and recording the excavation and to Vince Russett for providing professional advice and editing this report.

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.

Site location



Figure 1: Site location

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

Land use and geology

Currently the site is in the unconsecrated section of the new graveyard.

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

Historical & archaeological context

The report YCCART 2010/Y14 provides full details including the following.

In 2008 a piece of pre-Conquest pottery together with human bone fragments were recovered by Vince Russett, North Somerset County Archaeologist from the spoil heap of recently dug graves at the western of the current graveyard.

The report also highlighted anomalies revealed during resistivity surveys and recommended that *in view of these anomalies being close to the current graves in the new church yard a small trial excavation is undertaken before the digging of further graves destroys any feature.*

Since the resistivity survey recorded in YCCART 2010 / Y14 the line of graves has been extended. In order to agree the location of an excavation trench a new resistivity survey was undertaken as per the plan in fig 2 below.

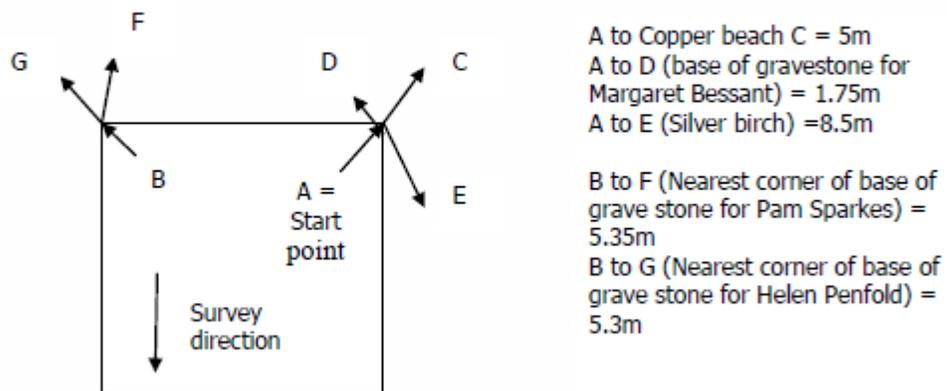


Fig 2: Plan of resistivity survey undertaken on 2 June 2011

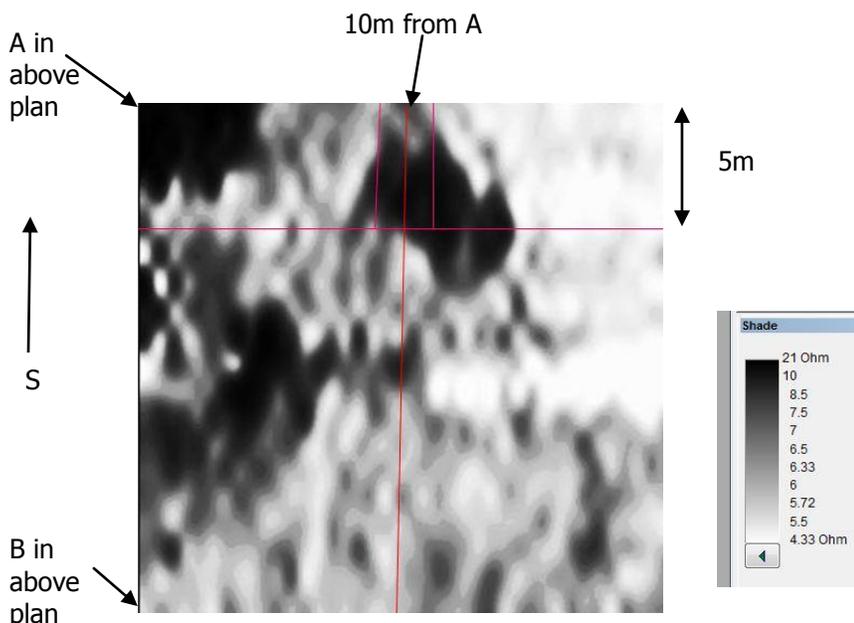


Fig 3: Resistivity results using ArcheoSurveyor program

The result in figure 3 was obtained using the same ArcheoSurveyor filter adjustments used in the previous survey on the same site.

It was agreed to excavate a 5m by 2m trench 5m north from A 1m either side of the 10m point as shown on fig 3.

The selected area contained high (black) responses suggesting a buried feature.



Carved stone found at western end of the current graveyard.

During the resistivity survey the carved stone above was discovered on the graveyard spoil heap and subsequently examined by Vince Russett. Vince considers that this could be the head section of a stone coffin from 12/13thc.

Excavation Objectives

The excavation had the following objectives.

- 1) To attempt to identify the nature of the anomalies revealed by the resistivity survey undertaken during the period April to June 2010.
- 2) To use the excavation to train YCCCART members and members of Community Archaeology in North Somerset (CANS) in excavation techniques.

Methodology

The trench was positioned to the west of the church in the area of the current churchyard currently unconsecrated and laid to grass.

From start point A on the June 2011 RM 15 survey a 10 metre line was taken to west, then a 5 m line north. Either side of this line a 1m trench was dug.

The report was written in Microsoft Word 2003.

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

Results

Some 300mm below the surface a layer of stones and rubble was revealed. This was spread across the northern half of the trench. Towards the centre of the southern section running south-east further stones were laid. These were less densely packed and included a number of stones with mortar attached, which appear to be from a wall or structure.

The context layers and associated finds are described in Appendix B and the relevant drawings and photographs are in figs 4 to 8 below.

Directly above the stones, and sometimes embedded within them, were a number of animal bones and teeth (sheep and pig).

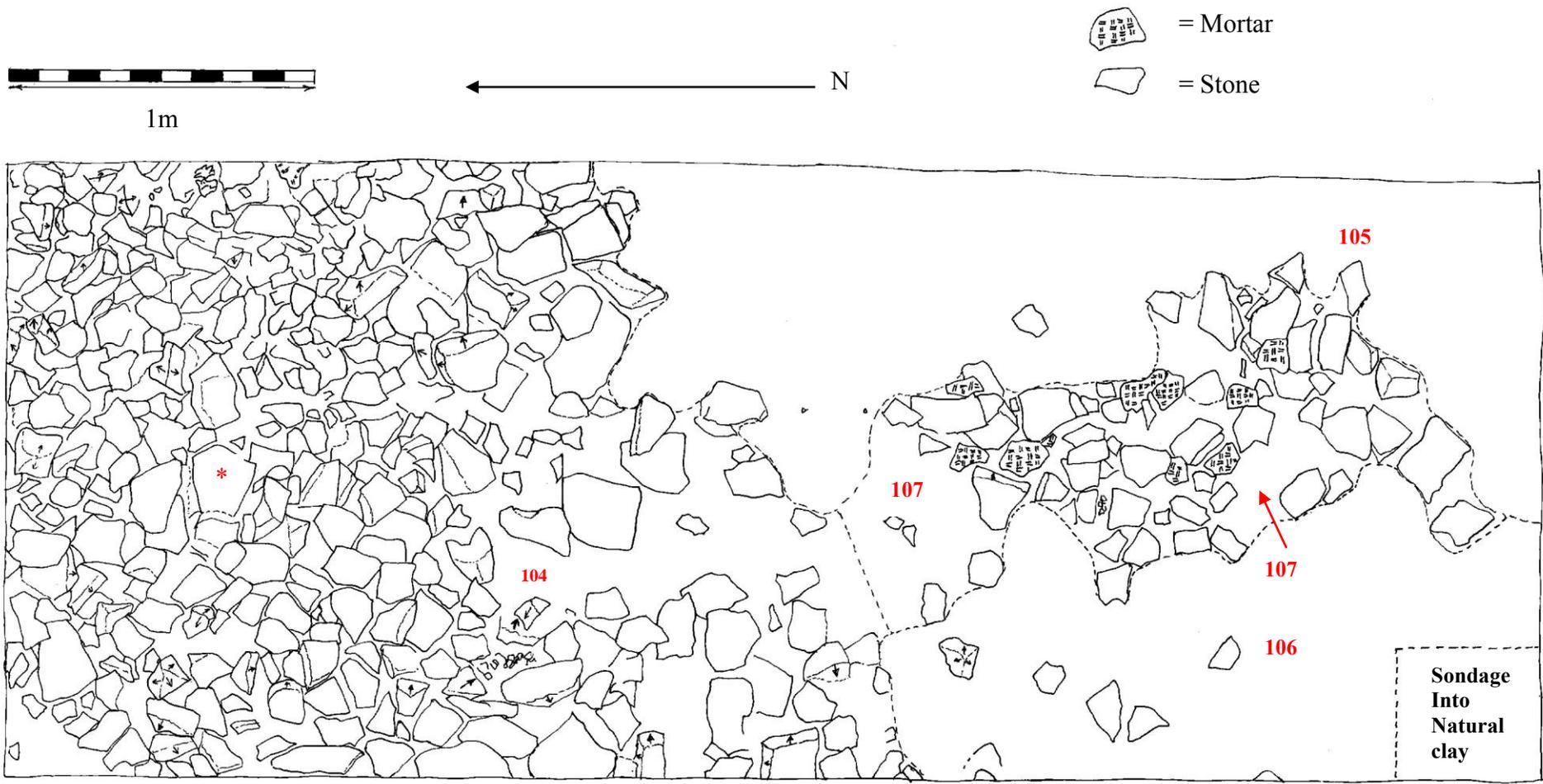
Just above the stones in context 103 a possible pre Roman or pre Norman shard of pottery was found.

Two pieces of Roman 3/4th c Oxford ware from separate bowls were found in the south elevation of the trench in context 105.

In context level 107 two pieces (which join) of pennant sandstone with two adjacent sharpening grooves were found together with a pennant sandstone roof tile with nail hole.

Context layer 105 contained a section of Roman clay roof tile (tegula).

Shards of Romano British Congresbury ware were found in context 101, 103, 104 and the un-stratified layer.



***Also 104**

Fig 4: Excavation plan. Context layers are indicated by red numbers.

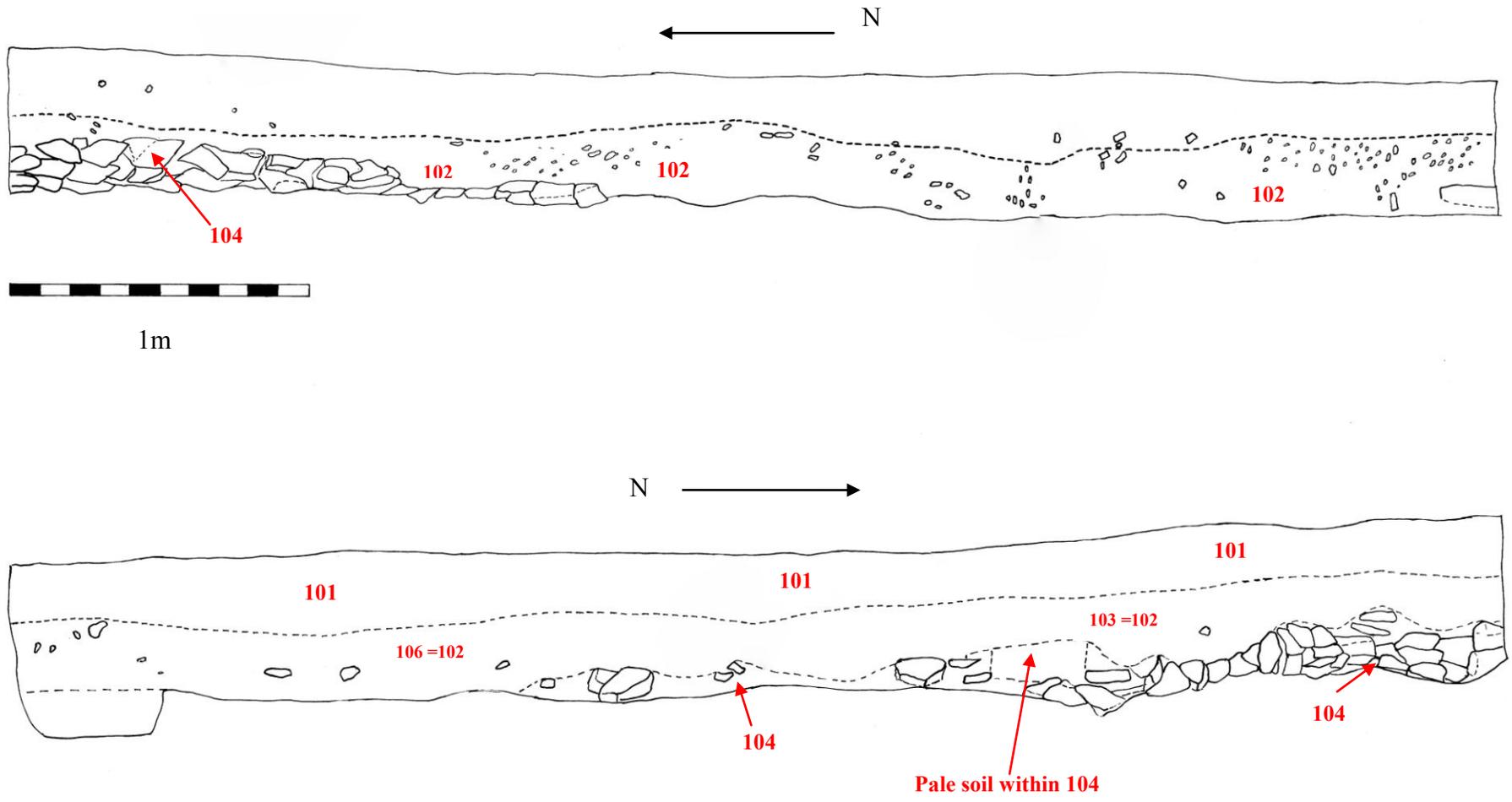


Fig 5: Elevation. Top is west facing section. Bottom is east facing section. Context layers are indicated by red numbers

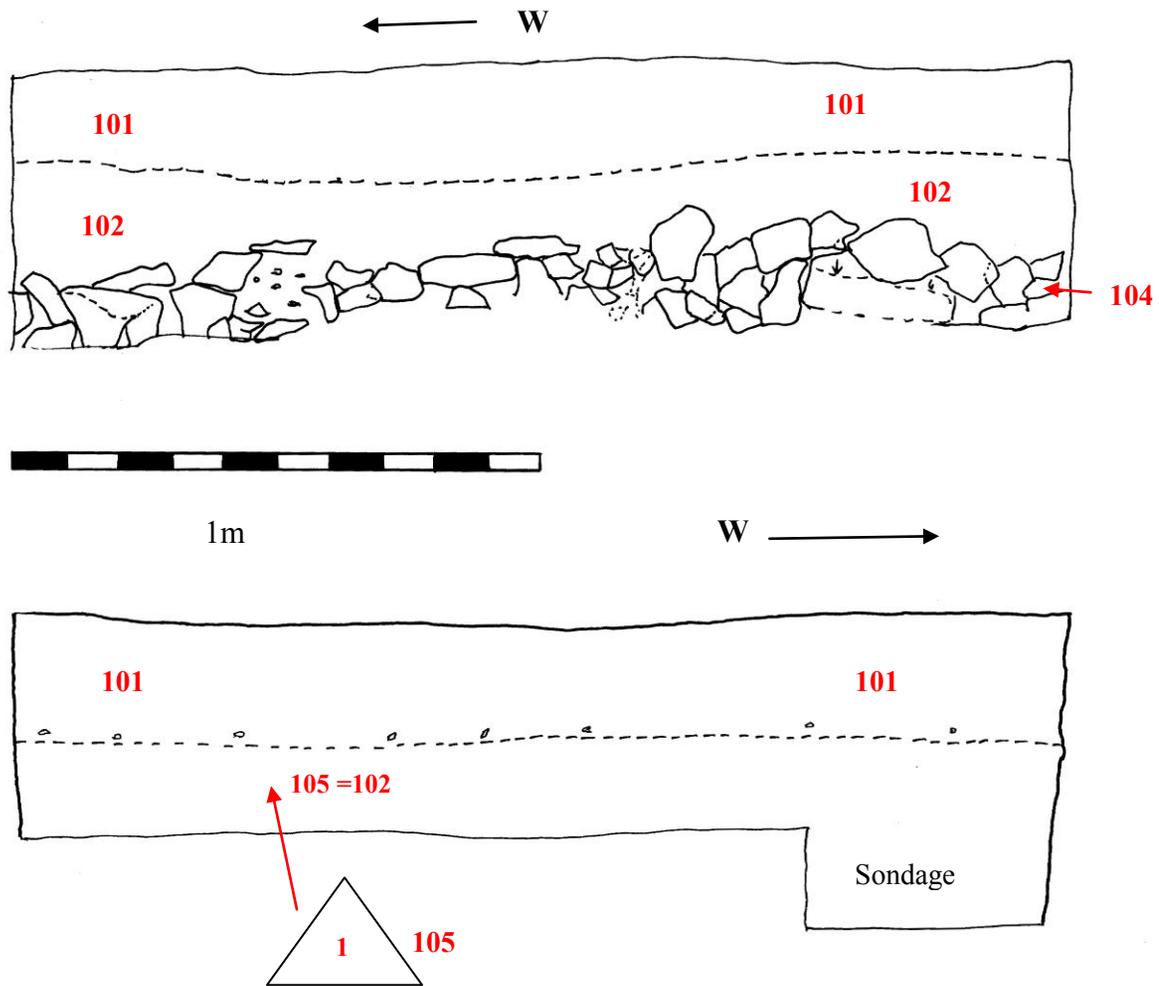


Fig 6: Top is north end elevation (south facing). Bottom is south end elevation (north facing). Context layers are indicated by red numbers.



Fig 7: Aerial photo of excavation

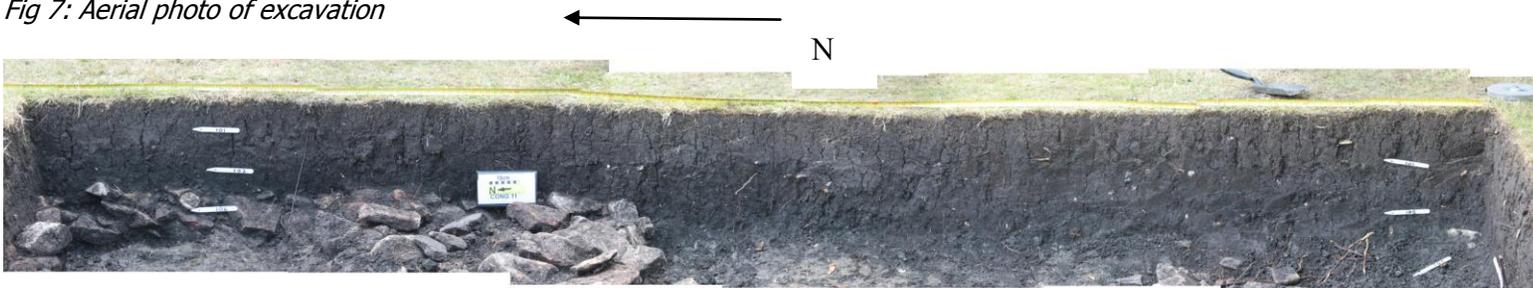


Fig 8: Aerial photo of west facing elevation

Conclusions

The results of the excavation bore out the resistivity surveys over the site as the spread of stones found accurately matched the pattern identified by these surveys.

A layer of stones and rubble was uncovered which has no delineated lines of a wall or similar structure. However, the presence of mortar attached to some of the stones suggests that all, or some of the spread, came from a nearby wall or structure.

The presence of the late Roman roof tile (tegula) and the stone roof tile with nail hole suggests that the excavation is close to a building of some status.

Oxford ware is of relatively high status and the presence of two unworn shards supports the supposition that the rubble could have come from a building of some status.

Congresbury was a centre of the early Christian Church in Somerset and early churches were invariably associated with Roman sites. This excavation suggests that such a site is in the vicinity.

Recommendations for further work

The results indicate that the excavated area is close to a high status Roman building and so it is recommended that a further small scale excavation is undertaken using another targeted area close to the excavation site.

References

Congresbury church YCCART report 2010 / Y14

Authors: Peter English & Chris Short

Date: August 2011

Appendix A
Photos of selected finds



Shard of Oxford Ware



Tegula



Roof tile (with nail hole broken off on right side)

Appendix B

Site Report

Site Report	
Site Name	St Andrew's Church, Congresbury, open churchyard
Project Code	Cong 11
Date of Excavation	13th to 16th June 2011
Attendees	13th: Steve Tofts, Pete English, Chris Short, Pete Wright, Colin Campbell, Unsal Hassan, David Long, Mary Campbell, Vince Russett, Geoff Pearson, Cheryl Muriel, Janet Burge, Lesley Candal, Ferdi, Nick Joy 14th : Steve Tofts, Vince Russett, Pete English, Chris Short, Pete Wright, Mike Fox, David Long, Geoff Pearson, Susan Dugas, Ian Morton, Shirley Everden, Mary Campbell, Unsal Hassan, John Wilcox, Cheryl Muriel Elizabeth Grundy, Ferdi, Maggie Rosevink, Philippa Cormack, Judy Sack, Colin Campbell 15th: Steve Tofts, Pete English, Chris Short, Pete Wright, Elizabeth Grundy, David Long, Unsal Hassan, Geoff Pearson, Ferdi, Colin Campbell 16th : Steve Tofts, Pete English, Chris Short, Pete Wright, Colin Campbell, Susan Dugas, Elizabeth Grundy, David Long, Ferdi, Nike Fox, Mary Campbell, Vince Russett, Unsal Hassan, Geoff Pearson, Cheryl Muriel, Maggie Rosevink
Weather	Mainly dry and warm. Rain showers on 15th and 16th
Size of excavation	Trench 5m long (north/south) 2m wide (east/west)
Location	See Context Records

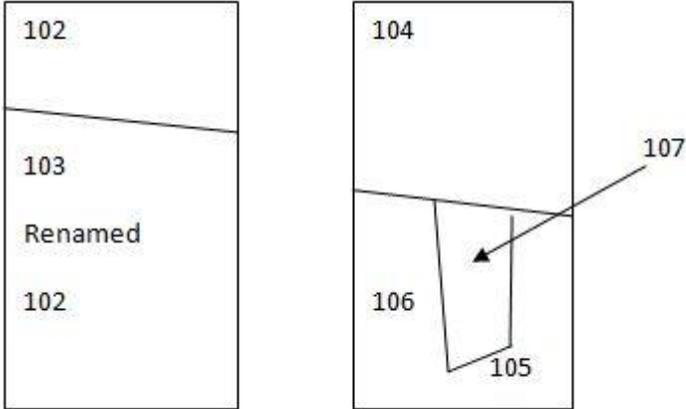
**Appendix C
Context Record**

Context No	Description	Date	Associated contexts	Coarse components	Consistence	Finds
101	Turf & subsoil	13.06.11		95% soil <1% tile <1% coke clinker <1% limestone pebbles <1% mortar and plaster	Firm	2 shards of Roman Congresbury ware, 6 shards of 18 th /19 th c pottery, 6 copper alloy fragments, 2 pre industrial nails, 4 pieces of 18 th /19 th c glass, a piece of lead, 3 coal fragments, 2 fragments of 19th brick, 2 pieces of 19th pantile & a piece of mortar on stone.
102	Dark soil below 101- north end	13.06.11		98% silty clay <1% white limestone <1% bone plus other inclusions	Crumbly	1 shard of partially glazed green medieval pottery (From rim) 1 shard of partially glazed green medieval pottery (From rim) 11 shards of 18 th /19 th c pottery, 10 fragments of glass (18 th /19 th c), an iron key, 12 pieces of bone and a tooth, & 8 pieces of brick
103	Dark soil below 101 – south end	13.06.11	Contiguous with 102 and renamed 102	99% Clay <1% inclusions	Hard lumpy	1 shard of Bronze Age or pre Norman pottery, 1 shard of Congresbury ware, 148 pieces of bone and 27 teeth, 1 nail, 10 shards of 18 th /19 th c pottery, 5 pieces of clay pipe stem, 1 piece of flint. 6 pieces of industrial brick, 4 fragments of 18 th /19 th c glass, 2 pieces of slag, 1 piece

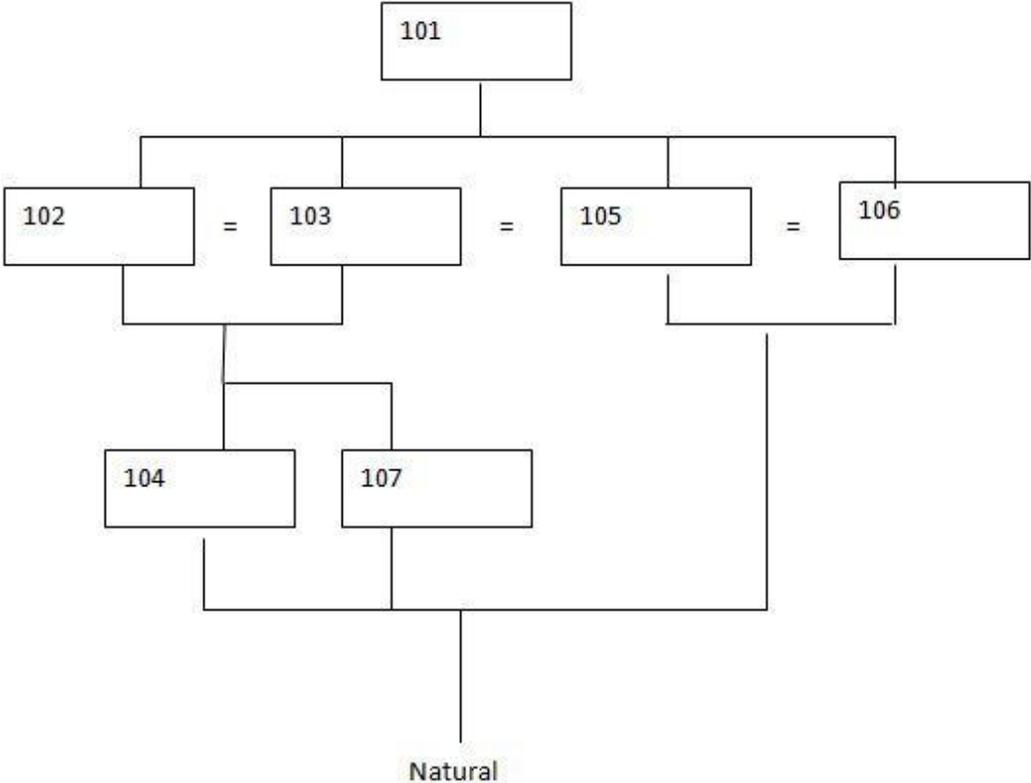
						of green glazed medieval pottery and 3 shards of 18 th /19 th c pottery, piece of whet stone, 4 bits of fired clay and san iron nail shank (pre industrial).
104	Stone rubble	14.06.11	Under 102/3	Stone rubble 25x15cm downwards. Mixed type-red (Domomite) stone and white/gray limestone		1 pennant whetstone, 5 pieces of mortar, 43 pieces of bone & 2 teeth, 3 pieces of whetstone. A stone bearing inscribed lines, 1 piece of slag, 1 pre industrial nail, 2 pieces of Congresbury ware rim 3/4thc, 1 shard of Somerset glazed red ware, 1 piece of brick & Roman roof tile (Tegula).
105	Cut (?) south east trench	14.06.11	Under 103-south east area	Stone free feature		16 pieces of bone, pieces of a pigs mandible, a piece of whet stone, 9 pieces of mortar, 1 shard of red earthen ware, 2 shard of 3/4 th c Oxford slipware (From 2 bowls)
106	Cut (?) south west trench	14.06.11	Under 103-south west corner	Stone free feature		
107	Extension of 104 with mortar	15.06.11	Under 102/3	Mortared stone. ? Wall rubble. Mortar adherent to stone.		Pennant sandstone roof tile with nail hole & 2 pieces (which join) of pennant sandstone with 2 adjacent sharpening grooves

Unstratified finds : 1 piece of pennant stone, a key, 7 pieces of bone, 4 pieces of brown glazed Somerset ware, 1 lump of flint, 1 piece of slag, g) 1 small brass button, 1 piece of window glass & 1 piece of Congresbury ware

CONTEXT PLANS

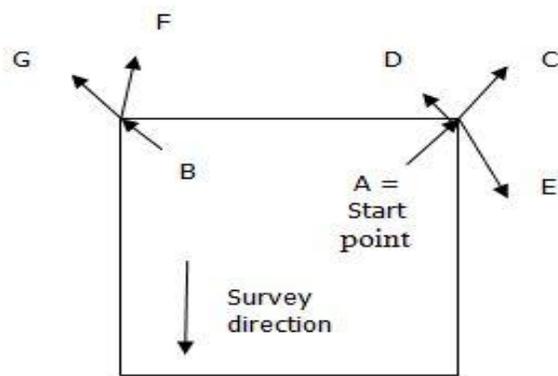


HARRIS MATRIX



Appendix D Resistivity Site Report

YCCART Site Survey					
Project – Congresbury church environs					
Survey date	2 June 2011				
Report date	2 June 2011				
Type /Instrument	RM15				
	Gain x1, Current 1mA Frequency 137Hz Probes 'Config 1' (2 probes)				
	Grid size: 20m x20m Pattern : Zig Zag Sample interval 0.5m Traverse Interval 1m. Mode Zig-Zag				
Weather	Dry, sunny & warm				
OS Ref or Lat-Longitude	ST444/672				
Site name	Churchyard extension, west of the new graves				
Landowner	Parish Council				
Tenant	None				
HER ref					
Site type	Open field				
Description	Grass				
Period	Unknown				
Geology	See Y14				
Land use	Burial ground				
Survey team	Colin Campbell, Judy Sacks & Charlotte, Philippa Cormack, Chris Short, Richard Baker, David Long & Susan Degus.				
Survey area	Notes	Readings			
	size	walk direction			
Grid ref #	1	20 m	W		
Survey complete	Saved in: ArcheoSurveyor as <i>Cong graveyard dig grid 1</i>				



A to Copper beach C = 5m
 A to D (base of gravestone for Margaret Bessant) = 1.75m
 A to E (Silver birch) = 8.5m

B to F (Nearest corner of base of grave stone for Pam Sparkes) = 5.35m
 B to G (Nearest corner of base of grave stone for Helen Penfold) = 5.3m