

**YCCCART 2010/10
North Somerset HER 47520**

**Mrs Rossiter's Paddock
Excavations in 1966 and 2009**

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

General Editor: Vince Russett



Brian Wills and Mike Fox at the 2009 excavation site.

Page	Contents
3	Abstract Acknowledgments Site location Land use and geology
5	Historical & archaeological context
6	1966 excavation
8	2009 excavation Excavation objectives Methodology Results
9	Discussion Recommendations for further work References
11	Appendix – “Dog bowl” photographs

Abstract

YCCCART has agreed with the Heritage Lottery Fund to undertake a project over two years, commencing May 2009, to establish the extent of the Congresbury Roman pottery kiln sites.

In 1966 two Romano-British pottery kilns were excavated in the paddock belonging to Mr & Mrs Rossiter at Yew Tree Farm, Venus St, Congresbury, but no report survives from that work.

In the summer of 2009, while geophysical examination of a small field known to have contained at least one Roman kiln site was in progress, a small trench was dug at a point reported as the position at which the kiln had been found. Excavation took place on several occasions, but little evidence of the site of the kiln was found, except for a number of sherds of pottery 'wasters.'

Acknowledgements

This excavation was undertaken with the help of a Heritage Lottery Grant and associated project to determine the extent of the Congresbury Romano-British kiln sites.

The owner, Mrs V Rossiter, gave her willing permission for the dig and has been extremely supportive and helpful.

YCCCART are most grateful for the information and photographs supplied by Mr D Lilly.

The authors are grateful for the hard work by the members of YCCCART in performing the excavation and to Ms S MacLean, formerly North Somerset Historic Environment Record Officer, for help and advice.

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.

Members of the North Somerset Archaeological Research Group (NSARG) excavated two kilns in this paddock in 1966, but produced no report. However, as a result of this project, Mr Derek Lilly (NSARG) and Mrs Valerie Rossiter have kindly provided YCCCART with notes and photographs taken at the time of the 1960s excavation.

Site location



Figure 1: Site location

The excavation site lies in the south east of the village of Congresbury, in the District of North Somerset. The centre of the site lies at ST 4443 6287, some 12 miles south of Bristol

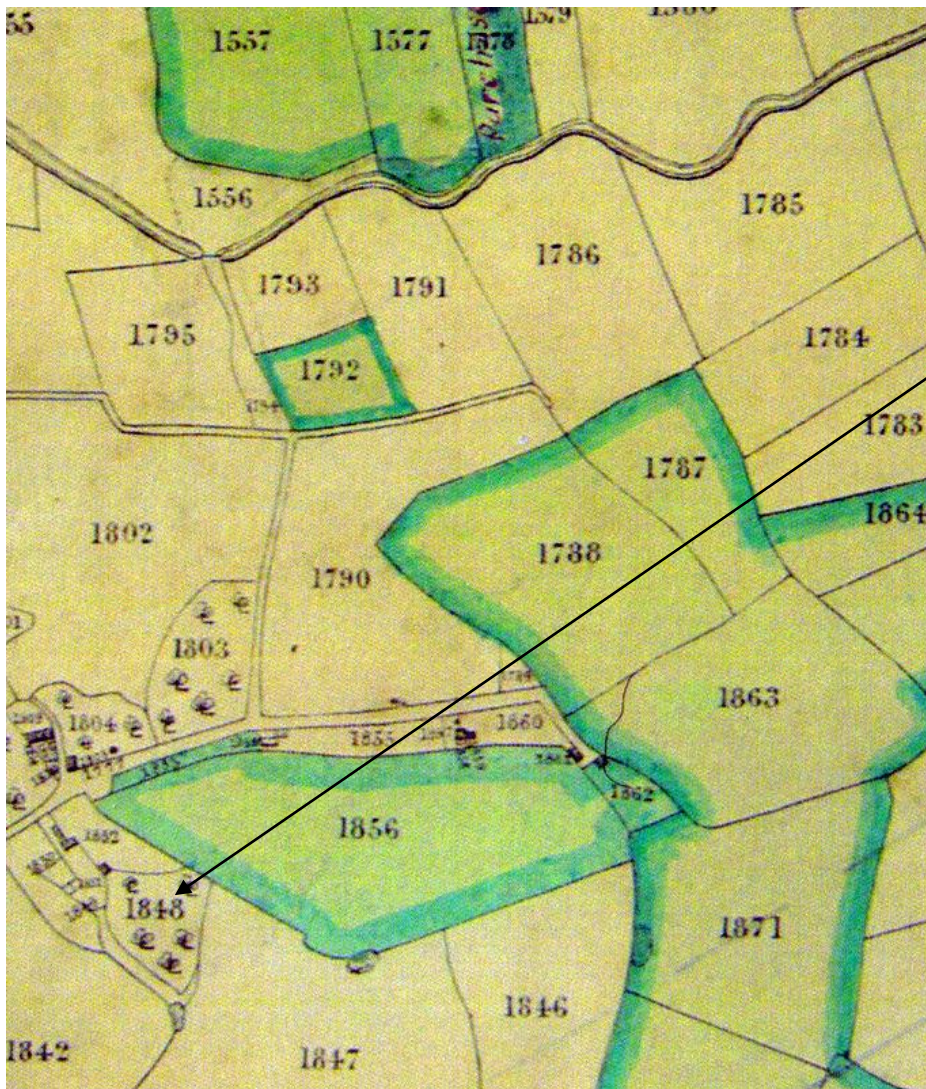
The paddock is privately owned but can be seen from a public footpath which crosses an adjacent field.

Land use and geology

The kilns lie on alluvial clay. Currently the paddock is grazed occasionally, and grass from the paddock is used for silage.

Historical & archaeological context

The paddock is centred on reference 1848 on the 1839 Tithe map of Congresbury. It is described, as below, in the Tithe apportionment as an orchard attached to the house at reference number 1850. This house together with the land was owned by John Hugh Smyth Pigott Esq but occupied by George Cavil. George Cavil is described as a farmer aged 50 in the Census of 1841.



Ref No	Name
1842	The Six Acres or Close
1846	The Four Acres
1847	Home Ground
1848	Orchard
1849	Garden
1850	House
1851	Barton
1852	Orchard

Figure 2: 1839 Tithe Map extract. Courtesy of Bristol Record Office BRO 37959/9

1966 excavation

According to the few notes so far found regarding this site (North Somerset Museum, MS files, *per* Jane Hill), it was discovered by Mr Rex Rossiter of Yew Tree Farm, in early summer 1966 while digging a post-hole.

The site was subsequently excavated by North Somerset Archaeological Research Group, when two Roman pottery kilns were dated as '4th century AD', on the advice of Mr (now Prof.) Philip Rahtz (North Somerset Mercury, 8 Oct 1966).

The surviving records provided by Mr Derek Lilly (NSARG) and Mrs Valerie Rossiter, comprise a series of photographs, a plan and sections of the kilns, and some notes prepared for a display in the early 1980s.

The kilns can be understood as Swan Type C, with central pedestals and no oven floor (Swan 1984). Other kilns have been noted, but no records survive of these, although there are two sketch maps in North Somerset Museum, of unknown date and authorship, which give some details but are mostly unhelpful.

It has not proved possible to trace finds from the excavation.



Figure 3: Clevedon school boys, who were also members of the North Somerset Archaeological Research Group, in 1966 on site at Yew Tree Farm.

Photograph courtesy of Mr D Lilly.



Figure 4: The core of the kiln excavated in the 1960s. Photograph courtesy of D Lilly
(The scale ruler is 12 inches)

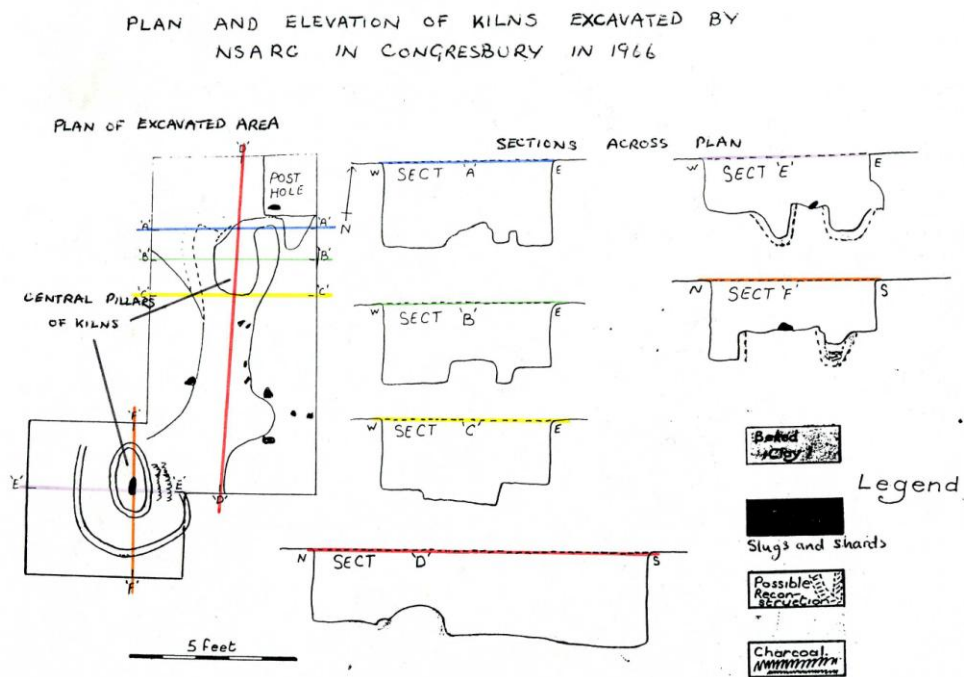


Figure 5: Kiln Plan 1966

2009 Excavation

Excavation Objectives

The excavation had the following objectives.

- 1) To attempt to identify the site of the kilns excavated in the 1960s.
- 2) To identify any potential additional kilns.
- 3) 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 close to the north-east corner of the paddock adjacent to Yew Tree Farm, 8.62m from the fence post in the eastern hedge, and between 0.48m and 0.56m distant from the northern fence. Overall the trench was 1.37m - 1.40m from east to west, and 0.96m from north to south (see plan below). It was dug to a depth of between 0.54m and 0.58m.

The trench was planned on 19th October, and the south-facing side of the trench was drawn in section. Unfortunately, due to weathering of the surface, several of the recorded contexts were not observed in the section.

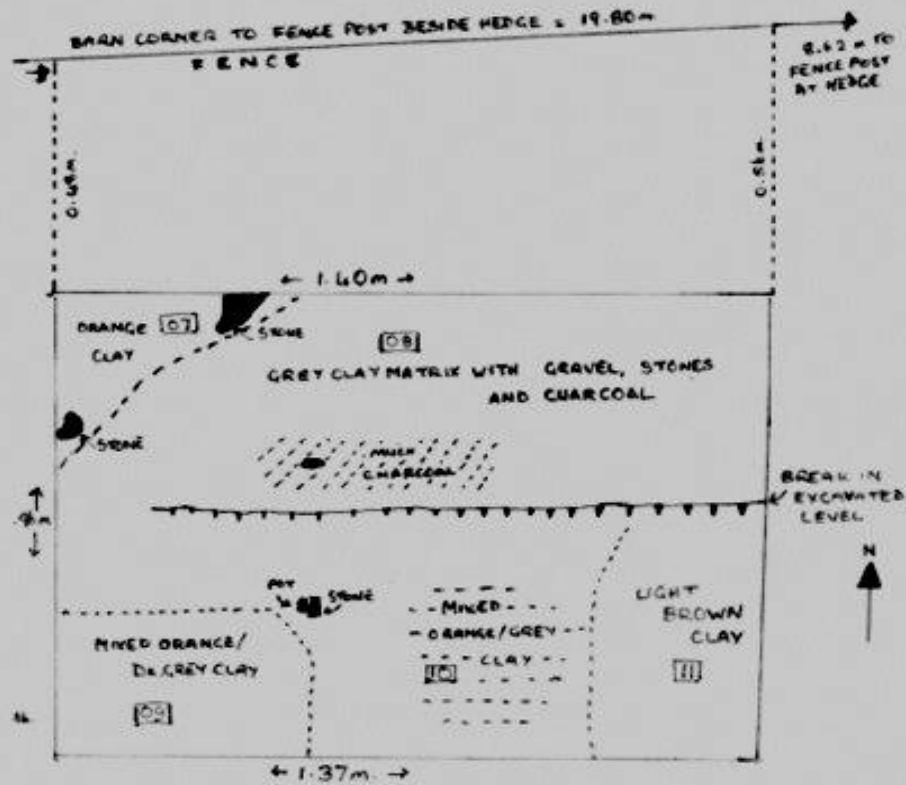
The report was written in Microsoft Word 2003.

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

Results

No evidence of any structure was found. The fill was mixed, and appeared to be the back fill from the 1966 excavation. A quantity of pottery wasters was found in all levels of the dig. These were almost all of Congresbury grey ware (Roman) and included the "dog bowl" illustrated below. Other small finds included charcoal, slag and burnt material which together with the bright orange clay seen in the north west corner of the excavation (See plan – context 07) might be evidence of the proximity of a kiln. Also found was one sherd of later 13th century Redcliffe ware.

48 Venus Street, Congresbury: trial pit in paddock PLAN



SECTION: south-facing

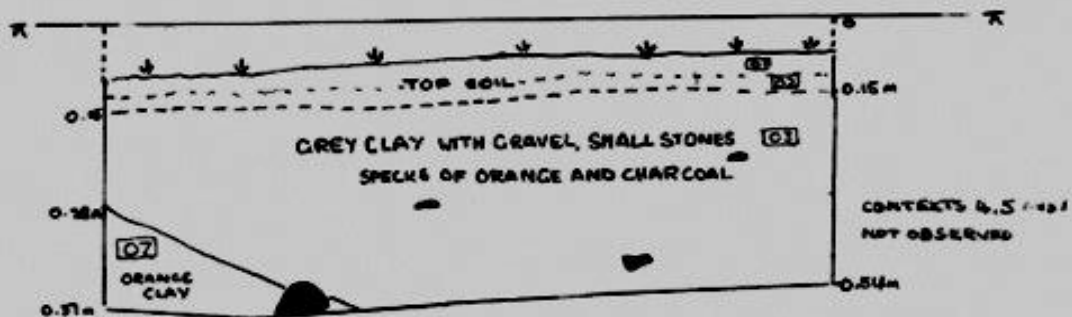


Figure 6: 2009 excavation plan and section.

Discussion:

It was unfortunate that the remains of the kiln seen in 1966 (See page 7) were not found. Records from the earlier dig were not specific as to the exact position of the kiln.

Recommendations for further work

None

References

Extract from 1839 Congresbury Map	<i>BRO 37959/9</i>
1966 excavation by North Somerset Archaeological Research Group	<i>Weston-super-Mare MS files, per Jane Hill</i>
Swan, V. 1984	<i>The pottery kilns of Roman Britain HMSO</i>

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Appendix



Part of the "dog bowl" excavated in 2009.