

YCCCCART

The future of the past

YCCCCART - A Brief History

Claverham Court

In 2004 John Atwell of Claverham Court Farm contacted me to say that the Tithe Barn on the farm needed some work carrying out to ensure its preservation. The problem was due to deterioration of the roof which meant that the building was not weather-tight and any advice regarding grant aid would be very welcome. He said that he had also contacted Vince Russett, the North Somerset County Archaeologist to see if he could help in any way, particularly as the barn was an important structure historically. In due course a meeting on site was arranged and I contacted several of Yatton Local History Society who met with John, Vince and myself and it was agreed that the building did need some remedial work carried out in order to secure its future. It was also agreed that a survey of the barn was a priority to record the structure prior to any work being carried out. A group of willing individuals then agreed to meet on Thursday mornings to carry out this survey.

We were aware that there was a lost Chapel on the same farm, so that became our next target, could we find it? We investigated a stone 'outcrop' which seemed promising but did not find anything positive although we did a small investigative 'dig', under Vince's supervision of course. Later in the story we borrowed some geophysical equipment and surveyed the likely areas for the 'lost' Chapel. Other areas were investigated on this farm over a period of some years including a Duck Decoy, an Ox House, water courses and leats and a Pound. We have also looked for a Poor House, all with some success.

The group increased in size as other interested people decided to come along and see what we were up to. Our activities expanded as we were made aware of other features in the general area of Yatton that could prove to be of some interest to us, as it was then an Archaeological section of the History Society.

YCCCCART Enclosures

We were invited by Mrs Mary Campbell to investigate a circular feature in the woods of Bickley (on the western end of Broadfield Down) and we spent a lot of time and effort in clearing away scrub, small trees and brambles until we were able to see that there was a tumble of stone which had originally formed a wall roughly circular on plan. This was our first hill slope enclosure (named Bickley 1), the first of many we have found since we started this group.

We have investigated during the past five years many areas and features including several more hill-slope enclosures on the slopes of Broadfield Down between Cleeve and Bristol International Airport; a Roman 'Villa' site, World War 2 Decoy, a Prisoner of War camp and a WW2 slit trench (including interviewing one of the Home Guard who helped to dig it!). We have also carried out 'digs' in Yatton gardens and walked fields which may have hidden archaeological features.

Formation of YCCCART

About three years ago we realised that Cadbury Iron Age hill fort had not been fully surveyed and we decided to start this large undertaking and at about this time several of us decided that it would be a very sensible idea to form a separate Archaeology group. Part of the thinking behind this was the idea that we could raise some funds and maybe we could purchase some equipment as up to that point we had to borrow any geo-physical equipment that we needed to carry out our investigations. I must mention that Vince Russett's involvement in all this has been invaluable with his support and freely giving his advice and help.

Therefore in 2008 YCCCART (Yatton, Congresbury, Claverham and Cleeve Archaeological Research Team) was officially formed with a membership of about twenty and a full committee.

Lottery Grant

As mentioned above we were dependent on borrowing any geophysical equipment that we needed in order to research several of the sites we had identified as being worthy of further investigation. We decided that we needed some money to enable us to purchase the necessary equipment for our own use. The obvious way to raise substantial funding was to apply for a grant from suitable organisations, so we started to look for a funding source that would be sympathetic to our needs and aims. Several small organisations were considered but we eventually approached the Heritage Lottery Fund who were able to offer a substantial grant if we could provide them with a good application. So later in 2008 we submitted our application for a substantial grant to the Heritage Lottery Fund. This involved completing about twenty pages of questions with supporting documentation and detailed costings of the equipment and a full programme of work. Our application was turned down with no real reason being given and we returned to seeking other possible providers.

Then, out of nowhere, we received a 'phone call in early 2009 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to invite us to re-apply as they had some additional funding available. We thought that we could do this fairly quickly (they set a tight schedule) and agreed to make a fresh application. Then we discovered they had changed all their application forms and we had to re-work the whole application! We did this within their target time and we received a grant of £34,100 for our project in May 2009.

With this funding we are purchasing various items of equipment to enable us to carry out geo-physical and manual surveys of the many and varied sites in our area. At this point I must mention the formation of Community Archaeology in North Somerset (CANS), this is a grouping of local archaeology groups all set up by Vince Russett, who are investigating most of North Somerset's archaeology. As part of our grant application we included the member groups of CANS as users of the equipment that we are purchasing when we are not using it. This will enable a larger area to make use of the equipment we have and we are committed to providing assistance and suitable training in conjunction with Vince.

Current Activity

We are now starting or in some cases continuing the surveying of various sites with particular emphasis on Cadbury Hill Fort and its environs and also the Roman Kiln sites in Congresbury. We expect to investigate these further with many other sites in years to come and we are also involving the local schools, local organisations and the general public in our activities by giving guided walks, presentations and talks to

enable everyone to become aware of the history and the heritage of our local environment.

We meet on Thursday mornings and if you would like to be involved telephone 01934-838018, or 833764 for more information. No experience is necessary.

Brian Bradbury (Chairman, YCCCART) 2009

A Subsequent History of YCCCART

YCCCART now has around 45 active members, and a successful web site, containing not only around 55 reports by members of YCCCART, but also reports from others (such as Mark Corney's 2004 earthwork survey of Cadbury Congresbury Hill Fort and Gill Bedingfield's thesis on the history of Iwood Manor in Congresbury), but also reports on geophysical and other surveys that the team have carried out with other CA teams across North Somerset, some of which have fed into North Somerset Councils management plans for their own land assets. The team members write the reports, and I have a role as general editor, which is a fairly low-key affair.

The HLF funding has now ended (it was for a period of two years) but the geophysical surveying equipment purchased then continues in use. The team have successfully identified a number of pottery kiln sites in the Roman kiln field at Congresbury; is part way through a complete geophysical survey of Cadbury / Congresbury Hill Fort, and has intentions to carry out geophysical survey next year at Woodspring Priory, in Kewstoke in North Somerset. The team raises expenses in a number of innovative ways, and it is not anticipated that funding will be a problem.

The team very much works in partnership with other bodies: we carried out geophysical surveys with National Trust at Tyntesfield, where we successfully recovered the location and plan of a former farm (possibly the original manor house for the estate); Yatton and Congresbury Parish Councils have been very supportive, and have grant-aided scrub and tree management at Cadbury Hill Fort; a number of groups got together to carry out geophysical surveys at Castle Batch, a Scheduled motte in Worle at Weston-super-Mare, where extensive domestic activity next to the motte implies potential existence of buildings, perhaps even a bailey: this has already influenced the management of this North Somerset park. A co-operation between the local wildlife group, YACWAG, ourselves, Yatton and Congresbury Parish Councils (the land owners), the Forestry Commission and English Heritage has resulted in a management plan for Cadbury Hill Fort that addresses heritage, biodiversity and access, which has triggered a successful management programme which had previously been stalled for at least the last 20 years.

The team also continues to carry out manual surveying, including the innovative use of a Nivcomp surveying instrument (see YCCCART 2011 newsletter). The company who produce the software used with this were persuaded to donate a full copy to us, and some of the results can be seen in the YCCCART 2011 newsletter (we produce a newsletter around twice a year or so).

This team is an open-ended commitment – there is no end date for the work, which will continue as long as the team members wish to carry on.

Lessons

Community Archaeology teams need a lot of work and support at the beginning, when active members are usually few, and work programmes are starting. This (to their credit) has been approved by my authority as a formal part of my work programme.

After a year or so, either they gain their own momentum and become largely self-supporting, or they wither on the vine. Out of the 20 or so I have worked with in North Somerset, only one went down the second route, due to unforeseen circumstances.

Vince Russett (member, YCCART) 2012