

YCCART

Newsletter

December 2012

Yatton, Congresbury, Claverham & Cleeve Archaeological Research Team

What a Wonderful Year YCCART Has Had

Geophysical surveys have been carried out in Congresbury, Iwood, Wick St Lawrence, Yatton, Wraxall (Tyntesfield) and Weston super Mare.

Results have exceeded expectations, particularly from the major surveys on Cadbury Hill Congresbury and at Woodspring Priory (see later in newsletter). Here surveys were undertaken under licence provided by English Heritage and many new structures revealed.

Geophysical investigations into the extent of Romano British kiln sites in Congresbury and the settlement area in Iwood have continued. Part of this action led to a small excavation at Iwood, which is described in the newsletter.



YCCART has carried out excavations, geophysical surveys and field walking in Yatton, to shed light on the early history of this village. Excavations were in the gardens of houses in Chescombe Road (formerly Biddle Street) and various materials were found including oyster shells, worked flint and pottery dating back to the 13C from Wiltshire and 15C from France.

Field walking carried out on fields near to Gang Wall, revealed Roman period brick and many other items were found from later periods.

The Nivcomp digital hydrostatic levelling instrument, (FRED to us) has been used to excellent effect on Cadbury Hill, (surveying a round house, features adjacent to the east of the 'citadel', and a larger survey, mainly showing contours, of part of the west end of the hill), and at Woodspring Priory (the Moat and Spring areas).

The Research Group has been investigating the Roman influence on Yatton and the surrounding area with particular empathises on the Roman Villa site at Wemberham and its environs. This study includes agriculture, communications (which includes roads, track ways and footpaths), marine defences and the site

location as the floor level appears to be below the river level.

We have also greatly enhanced our photographic and video record during the year.

A major aim of YCCART has been to publish its results quickly. 65 YCCART reports have been compiled by us and edited by North Somerset County Archaeologist, Vince Russett. All the reports have been published on our web site, which received a dramatic overhaul during the year and is widely used and praised.

YCCART has continued to give walks, talks and presentations. During the July Archaeological Week Vince led a walk in the rain on Cadbury Hill and other members got wet in Clevedon, where we had our own open air stall alongside Clevedon & District Archaeological Society and others. Talks were given for example to Yatton and Congresbury scouts, local history societies and Yatton Men's Society.

All this of course would not have been possible without the effort of the members of YCCART, the goodwill of landowners, help from other Community Archaeology in North Somerset (CANS) members and from Landmark Trust, The National Trust, English Heritage, North Somerset and local councils.

Two individuals deserve most thanks. North Somerset Councillor Robert Cleland who is the Heritage Champion for the county and a great supporter of community archaeology. The other is of course Vince Russett, whose enthusiasm, expertise and input to all our activities has been invaluable.



Member of YCCART, Vince Russett and Robert Cleland pointing out Woodspring Priory findings to Culture Minister John Penrose MP in May 2012

L to R: Robert Cleland, Vince Russett, John Penrose, Unsal Hassan

Woodspring Priory - Vince's Wish Fulfilled

Vince Russett, North Somerset County Archaeologist, always wanted to undertake geophysical surveys at Woodspring Priory in order to see if there were any unknown buildings around the current standing ones. Thanks to YCCART and WESMART (Weston Super Mare Archaeological Research Team) his wish came true during the summer of 2012.

The priory was founded around 1210, at or near the site of a village that had been flourishing at the time of the Domesday Book in the late 11th century AD and was dedicated to Thomas Becket (the founder was a grandson of Reginald Fitzurse, one of Becket's murderers). It was home to a small community of Victorine Canons.

In the years since the Priory was dissolved (1534) it has variously been a house, a hospital for maimed soldiers and a farmhouse, and is now a property let for holidays by the Landmark Trust.

Some of the buildings, such as the chancel, were demolished in the 16th century (and were excavated in the 1970s), but were there other buildings?

Resistivity surveys in particular exceeded expectations and revealed a number of previously unknown features, one associated with the spring in the orchard fronting the priory.

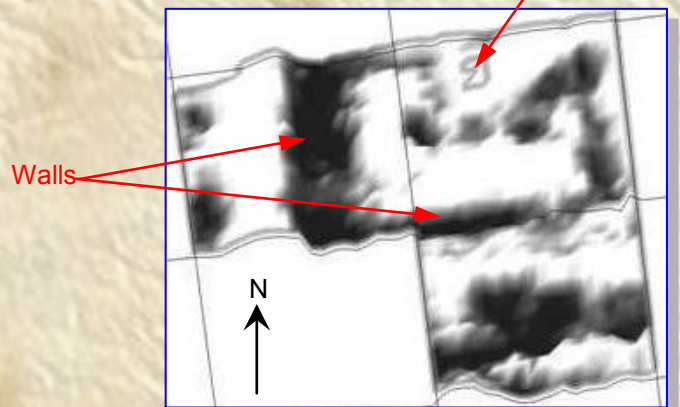
A square feature around the spring is shown in the survey result below. Is this some sort of structure? It's probably too large at about 22m x 20m to be a building, but there is the tradition of walled enclosures around springs, largely for the practical purpose of stopping pollution of the water by animals, although if the spring is sacred (a 'holy well') this may also have the purpose of enclosing a ritual area

around the spring. It no longer runs, although the site does fill with water after heavy rain.

The surveys at Woodspring were an excellent example of the success of community archaeology in North Somerset. We hope to undertake further surveys with WESMART in 2013. Who knows what we may find?



Orchard spring looking North



Orchard spring resistivity result (3D image)



Iwood Dig

On June 26th members of the Team carried out a limited dig in one of Mr Alan Collin's fields at Iwood. The dig was carried out to determine the nature of linear indications revealed as a result of earlier magnetic geophysics surveys carried out by the Team.



A trench 10m long and approximately 1m wide was dug across the line of one of these linear indications.

In a field that has produced a number of Roman, and later, artefacts our trench produced none. However, at a depth of approximately

0.45m we uncovered a roughly circular area of clay in the red-brown soil. Half of this was excavated. This showed the clay to be approximately 25mm deep with a layer of carbonised material at the bottom.

It is our opinion that what we uncovered is a posthole and that the linear indications are the remains of enclosures surrounded by fences.

We have been unable to date the linear features. We did, however uncover one small piece of Iron Age pottery amongst the excavated soil. This may or may not be significant.

What else have we learned from the dig?

- The 601 magnetometer has identified earthworks, as it is designed to do.
- The RM15 (soil resistance survey) had worked properly in that it did not pick up the post hole.
- Our mapping out of the field had been extremely accurate. The post hole was exactly where we had calculated the linear indication should be.

We have yet to complete the RM15 survey of the field. If this reveals anything of particular interest we will carry out further excavations.

Cadbury Hill - Update

YCCCART's most difficult geophysical surveys so far were successfully completed on Cadbury Congresbury Hill Fort during the period February 2011 to March 2012. The rocky, uneven surface, humps and bumps and overgrowth in the form of brambles, shrubs and trees presented real obstacles to the teams who also operated in the hot as well as very cold weather.

Both gradiometry and resistivity results are very complex and need a lot of work to fully interpret them. One problem on Cadbury hill is that the area was mined at least as early as the Iron Age, and it is not known how much this has affected the results.



Left: The centre of the hill fort now cleared of all but a solitary pine tree.



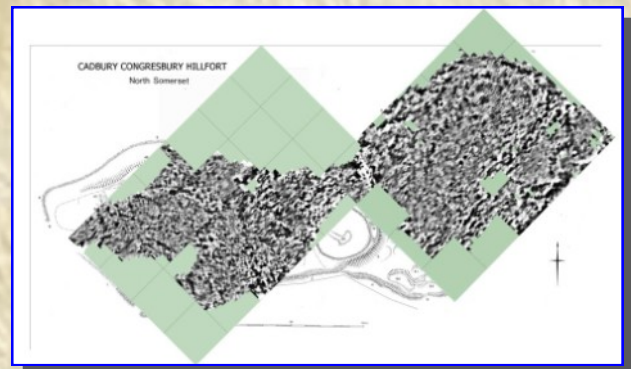
Right: Looking North over Yatton a view that has only recently been opened up.

Early photographs of Cadbury show the hill devoid of trees. If you haven't been on top for some time you will see huge changes. Thanks to funding by Congresbury and Yatton Parish Councils, which are responsible for the hill, and Graham Morgan who manages the site for the two councils, many dangerous trees have been removed and areas cleared of overgrowth. This was necessary not only on health and safety grounds but also to preserve the nationally important archaeology of the site and to encourage wildlife.

But for this clearance action over the last few years it would not have been possible to have surveyed so much of the hill fort for the first time.

The full report of the surveys can be viewed on the YCCCART web site and shows the effort to have been well rewarded.

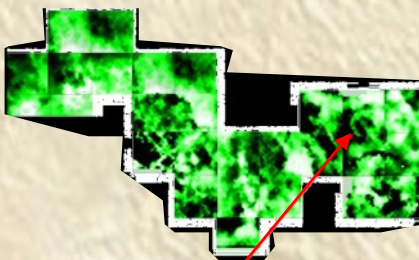
The clarity of resistivity and gradiometry surveys exceeded expectations and revealed a number of previously unknown features as well as those known through past archaeological excavations.



Gradiometry results overlaid on a manual survey by Mark Corney.

The gradiometry results shown above illustrate the difficulty of the task. How many circular and linear features can you spot?

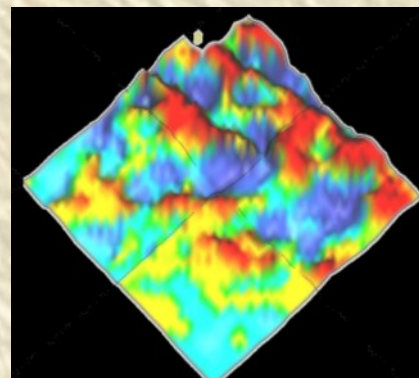
We hope to undertake further surveys on the hill when more overgrowth is cleared. What else will we reveal?



The most recognisable known feature revealed is the circular structure indicated by the arrow towards the top right in the picture of the



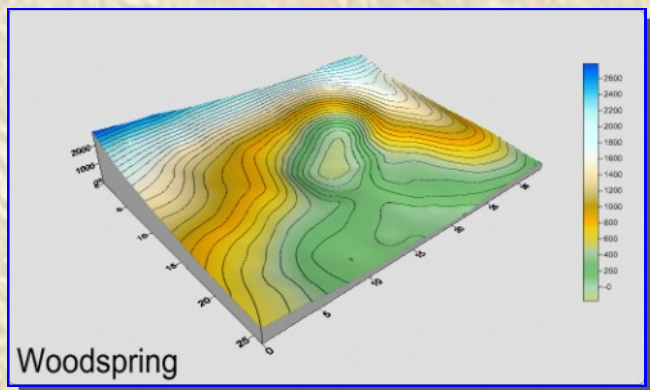
resistivity results. This mirrors the plan of Structure II described in the report on the Cadbury Hill excavations during 1968 to 1973 as a shrine or temple. The brown, circular object bottom left above shows the shrine when it was excavated.



Example of previously unknown features is shown on the colour image above. This 3D image shows what appear to be several linked round houses.

FRED at Woodspring Priory

One of the highlights of the year using FRED was the results from Woodspring Priory, where the moat and orchard spring were surveyed. The image shown below is a 3D representation of the orchard spring (see also the article on page 2). The image demonstrates the exact shape of the surface features which differ from that from the previous manual survey (Tomalin 1972 - see Figure 10b on page 10 of [YCCcart report 2012/Y12](#)).

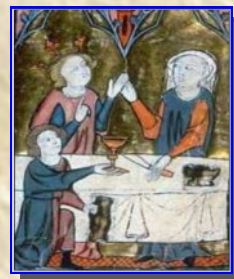


Ancient Recipe - IPOCRAS

This spiced wine was a popular drink from the middle ages. The following is a recipe dated 1529:

450 ml dry red wine
450 ml dry white wine
1 teaspoon powdered cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon powdered cloves
1/8 teaspoon powdered ginger
2 tablespoon sugar (or more to taste)

- 1 Combine all the ingredients in an enamel or heat-proof glass container.
- 2 Bring slowly to the boil.
- 3 As soon as it starts boiling, remove from the heat. Strain through a cloth sieve set over a bowl. Serve at room temperature, or slightly cool.



Impressions of a New Member

As the newest member of the local archaeological team, I thought I would write down a few thoughts about my experience so far.

My background is 40 years in electrical power engineering and my knowledge of archaeology until recently could have been written on the back of an envelope! However, I have spent some time in the past walking Dartmoor and wondering about the ancient standing stone rows and circles seen there. I also spent several months managing a large electricity project on the Isles of Scilly and saw archaeologists looking into the newly dug cable trenches and recovering 'artefacts'.

Since then I have retired and moved to Congresbury. With more time on my hands I was interested to see a group of people looking into an excavation in the proposed graveyard extension of St Andrews Church. Being inquisitive, or plain nosy, I had a look to see what was afoot, and made my first contact with YCCcart. As I showed some interest in the proceedings, I was introduced to members of the team who explained what was going on.

From then on I was hooked on this fascinating subject and over the past 6 months have got involved in fieldwork, and have listened to the more experienced members of the team discussing and interpreting the field results. As an indication of the depth of the expertise in the team, I was very impressed to learn that it owned over £30,000 worth of equipment purchased with the aid of a lottery fund grant



John Surveying with RM15

from the Heritage Lottery Fund. I do not yet understand the computer programmes used to convert the field results into pictures, some in 3-D, nor how to interpret these pictures, but I am slowly learning.

I am still on a steep learning curve, but help and advice is always on hand and readily given which I really appreciate. I have found all the members of YCCcart to be very friendly and welcoming, and I have not been made to feel that my lack of knowledge of archaeology has made me somehow less useful to the team.

I would heartily recommend anyone with even a little bit of interest in archaeology, perhaps from watching Time Team on television, to 'give it a go' with YCCcart. If you are anything like me, you will be glad you did.

John Haynes

New Members Welcome

If you are interested in joining the team you will be very welcome. No experience is required as training will be provided. You do not even need to be interested in archaeology or history – we also need people that have skills in topics such as photography, web design, data processing, technology or you may just enjoy spending time out doors with a friendly group of people.

For further information please contact Brian Bradbury on 01934 838 018

Read our reports and catch up with our progress on
www.ycccart.co.uk

