

**YCCART 2024/Y12**

**Gradiometry survey at field NW of Ham Farm, Yatton  
(Crossman 13)**

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

*General Editor: Vince Russett*



Interior of medieval dovecote, Ham Farm

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## **Abstract**

*Gradiometry survey in this field showed ditches reflecting its recent rearrangement (late 20th C), along with a potentially interesting sub-circular feature (although this may be an equitation feature). No responses indicated Roman or medieval archaeology survived in this field, probably a reflection of its topography and long-term use as arable land.*

## **Acknowledgements**

A Heritage Lottery Grant enabled the purchase, by YCCCART, of a Geoscan RM 15 resistivity meter and a Bartington Gradiometer 601 without which this survey could not have been undertaken.

This survey would also not have been carried out without the willing permission of the landowners, David Crossman and the Crossman family.

The authors are grateful for the hard work by the members of YCCCART in performing the surveys and Vince Russett for editing.

## **Introduction**

Yatton, Congresbury, Claverham and Cleeve Archaeological Research Team (YCCCART) is a Community Archaeology team working across northern Somerset.

Our objective is to undertake archaeological fieldwork to enable a better understanding and management of the heritage of the area while recording and publishing the activities and locations of the research carried out.

## Site location



Fig 1: Location (general)



Fig 2: Location (specific)

The survey site lies to the north of Ham Farm, off Ham Lane in Northend, in the parish of Yatton, in the Unitary Authority of North Somerset. The centre of the survey lies at ST41876757, and some 4.0km from the centre of Clevedon.

### **Land use and geology**

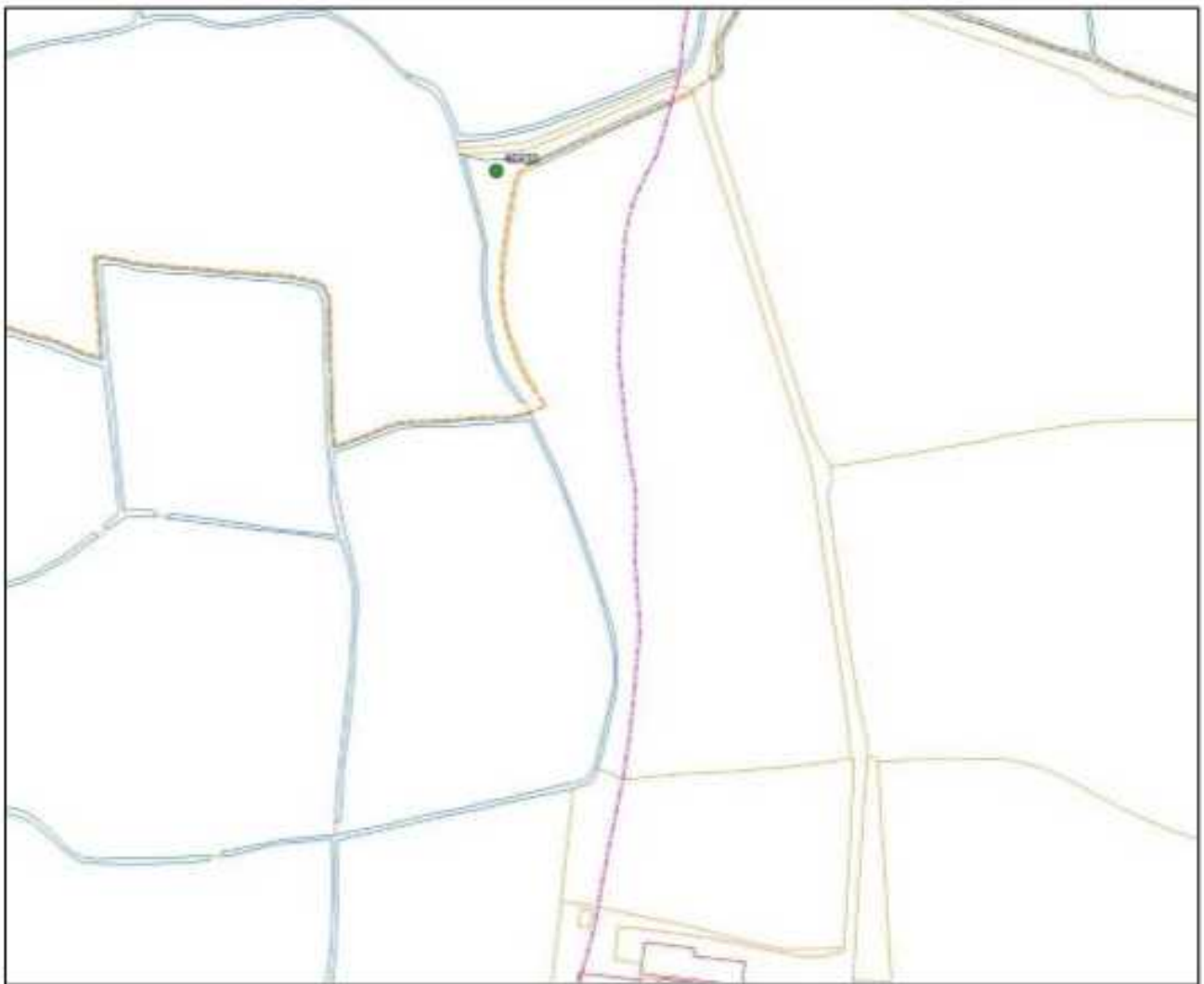
The site lies entirely on the Chara Marl (Keuper marl), which outcrops in the area, and is almost certainly responsible for the choice of this site for the high status Ham Farm. It lies at 6.8-7.8m AOD, above the surrounding alluvium, which is about 1.0m AOD lower.

The site is currently used for exercising horses, under permanent pasture. Items used in this exercise are at intervals through the field. Technically, a Public Right of Way crosses the field from SW to NE, but the public are asked to respect the routing to the west of the field. This still enables a full view of the site.

## Historical & archaeological context

Ham Farm was seen in the 18th century as the capital message (manor house) of the Manor of Ham and Wemberham. Although this manor does not seem to be mentioned before the 18th century, the perception of Ham Farm as such reflects its high status, as does the possession of a circular dovecote in its front garden (see cover): this is dated by Historic England as 17th/18th century, although the presence of lower nesting holes, later infilled, may imply an origin of at least part of the structure before the advent of the brown rat in the late medieval period (brown rats can jump much higher than the previously dominant black rat, so lower boxes were infilled to prevent rat access to eggs or squabs).

Barraclough (1991) dates Ham Farm to the medieval period: while the current property is later, she may well have been correct about the origins of the site.



*Fig 3: Survey site as mapped in 2009 (OS digital data)*

The fields around the survey site were rearranged between 1973 and 1991 (OS mapping),

presumably to improve access , thereby producing the current field arrangement, by adding the western ends of three fields to the site.

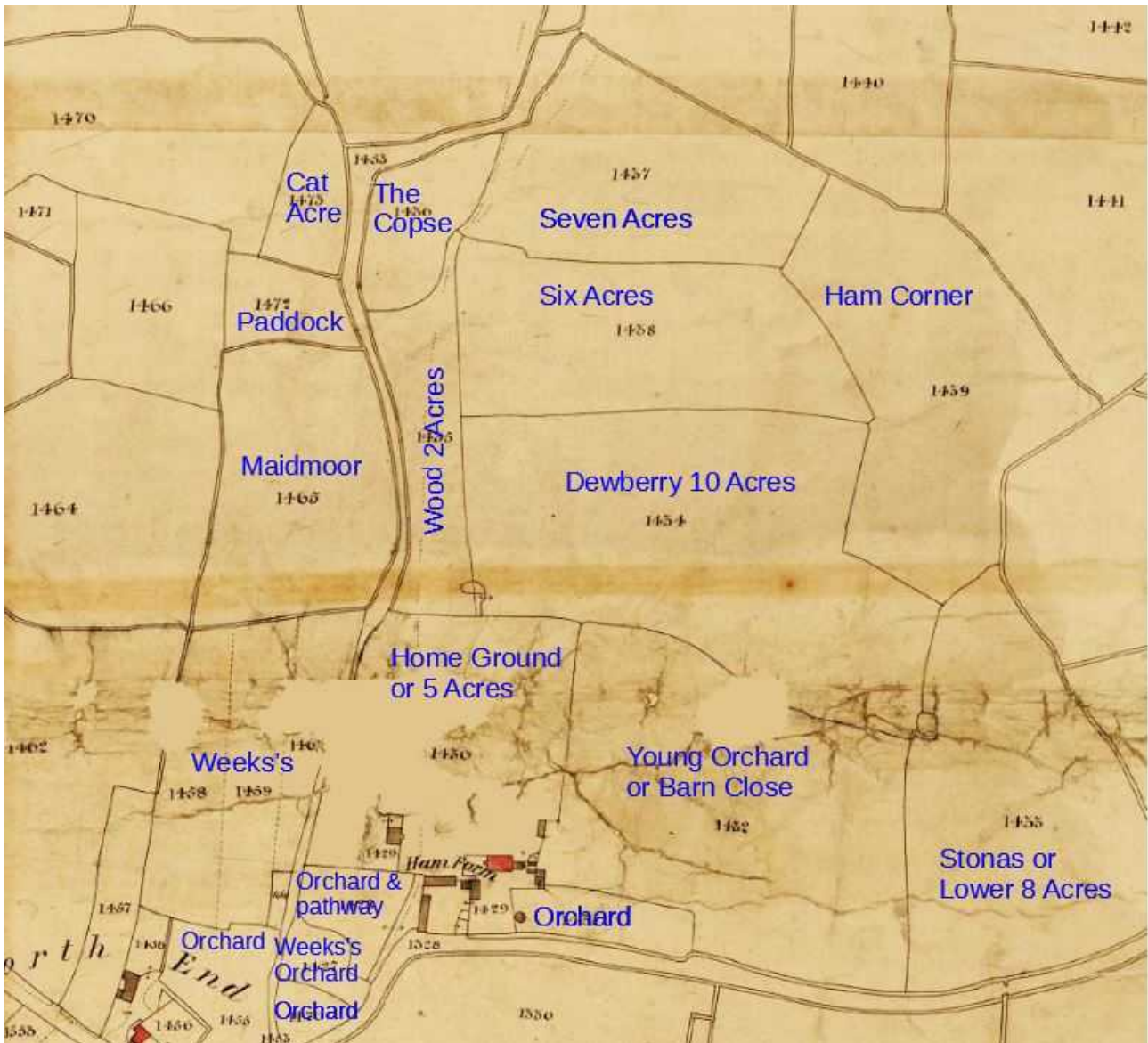


Fig 4: Area and fieldnames from Yatton Tithe (1840)

The fieldnames of 1840 are fairly unremarkable: 'Ham Corner' refers to its proximity to the recently enclosed Kenn Moor; 'Dewberry' (if not a corrupted '-burh' name) is from the plant *Rubus caesius*, a low briar which has this local name; 'Maidmoor' and the adjacent 'Maidmoor Lane' refers to the adjacent 'Meadmoor' (to which the lane leads), a late-enclosed area, with the simple name meaning 'Wetland meadow'.

For placenames west of the lane, see YCCART 2020. Note a large part of the survey area bears names connected with woodland (although the field called 'The Copse' was recorded (ironically) as arable in 1840). One thing that stands out from this plan is that the countryside is not immutable and unchanging, but that we should be prepared for placenames to refer to one particular phase of a land parcel's history, which may have

happened some time ago, and by the time of the survey is no longer contemporary information.

Ham Farm also formed a landunit in 1768, when it was recorded as part of the 1768 Pigott survey.

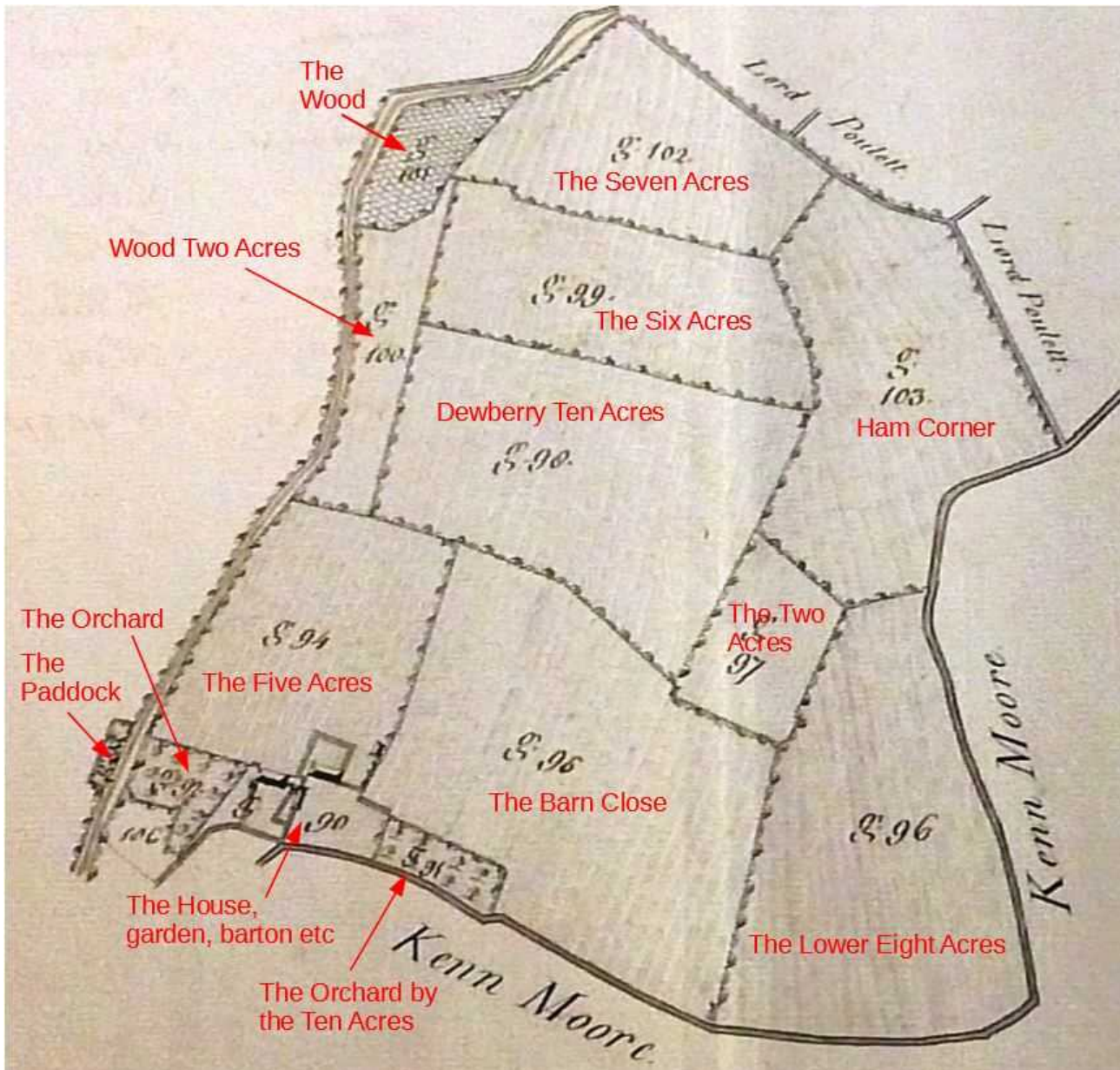


Fig 5: Ham Farm tenancy unit (tenant: Joseph Blew) (from Pigott map book of 1768, courtesy Mr David Ridley)

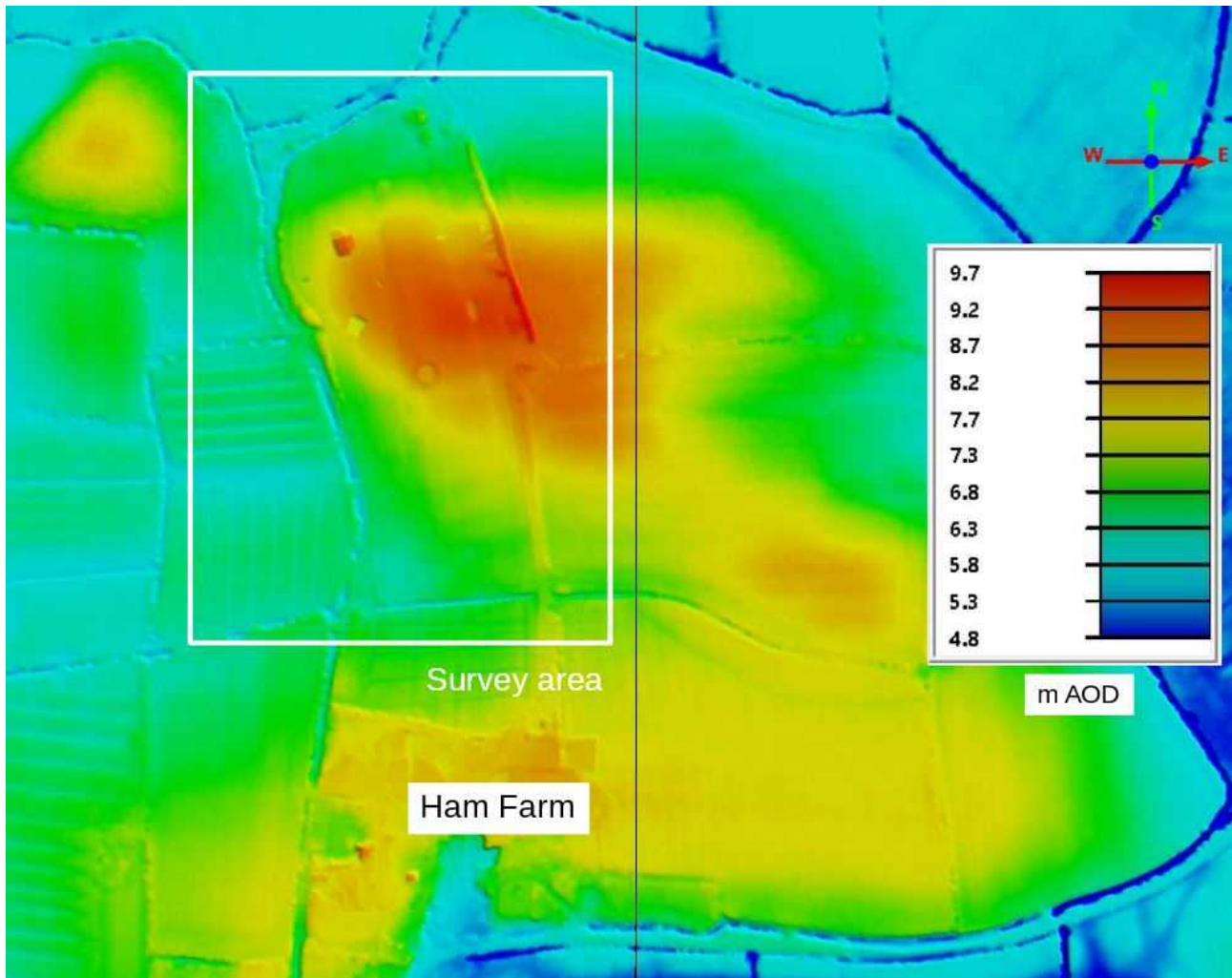
Barraclough (1991) states:

*Joseph Blew came from Winscombe and was occupying Ham Farm in 1777 when it is called a 'capital messuage' in his lease from John Pigott. This means that it was the manor house of the Manor of Ham and Wemberham, which Poulett did not own. Therefore it is probable that a house has stood on this site for many centuries. Joseph died in 1784 and*



*his widow and sons James and Joseph continues as occupiers.*

How long this manor had existed is perhaps questionable. Barraclough does not quote, nor is there any available evidence of (say) medieval origins, perhaps other than the above mention, and the possession of a dovecote, supposedly a prerogative of the 'Lord of the Manor'.



*Fig 6: Lidar image of survey area*

The lidar image shows the attraction of the Ham Farm area, a promontory of Chara Marls standing some 1-3m proud of the surrounding Northmarsh. The survey area contains land that is, if anything, slightly higher than that at the farm itself. With easy access to the seasonal grazing in the Northmarsh (later characterised by the formal track to Meadmoor) to the north, and to the narrowed end of Kenn Moor to the south, the area has potential for both early post-Roman occupation, as well as some role in the controlling of stock on Kenn Moor (and possibly of a floodtime refugium for such (see YCCART 2017)).

Such accesses to grazing Commons are necessary for the control of stock, especially long-term grazers, who when leaving are frequently described as 'wild as hell!' (a phrase repeated to me by several graziers on Mendip) since they have effectively been left to

their own devices for months at a time: the narrowing serves to control and calm such animals, since they need to be initially isolated when leaving, to check for injuries, parasites and general condition before returning to the inevitably more crowded winter quarters.

On Mendip, these structures (a set of boundaries narrowing to a lane or gate, with the open end against a grazing Common, used for stock control) have the useful shortened name of *shoot* (sp. various) (from OE *sceát* = nook, corner) - local examples included Shute Shelf on the A38 Winscombe/Axbridge boundary ('*shoot* on level land'). A second term *lett*, may have been used on eastern Mendip in the post-medieval period, but there is danger of confusion with Somt. dialect '*let*' = 'stint, number of animals permitted on Common'.

As mentioned in the discussion relating to Fig 5 (above), the landuse history of the field now Crossman 13 is complex, and may relate to the geophysical survey results (below).

Ham Farm - Field 2 - SLRM lidar



Fig 7: More detailed recent lidar survey, courtesy of Richard Pearson

The detail in Figure 7 is discussed in Results (below).

## **Survey objectives**

This survey was designed to add to the area around Ham Farm that had been subject to geophysical survey, since the potential for both Roman and medieval occupation was thought on landscape grounds to be good.

Secondarily, to see if meaningful results could be obtained from a working field with working impedimenta in place.

## **Methodology**

The survey of the fields was undertaken during the period February to April 2024 by teams from YCCCART using a Bartington 601-2 gradiometer.

The completed survey was downloaded to a TerraSurveyor programme and the resultant composite adjusted using the following filters:

Colour - Red Blue Green 2  
Band weight equaliser  
Grad shade  
Destriped  
Despiked  
Clip SD2

The report was written in Libre Office 5 Writer.

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

## Results

The final gradiometry survey results were as shown below:

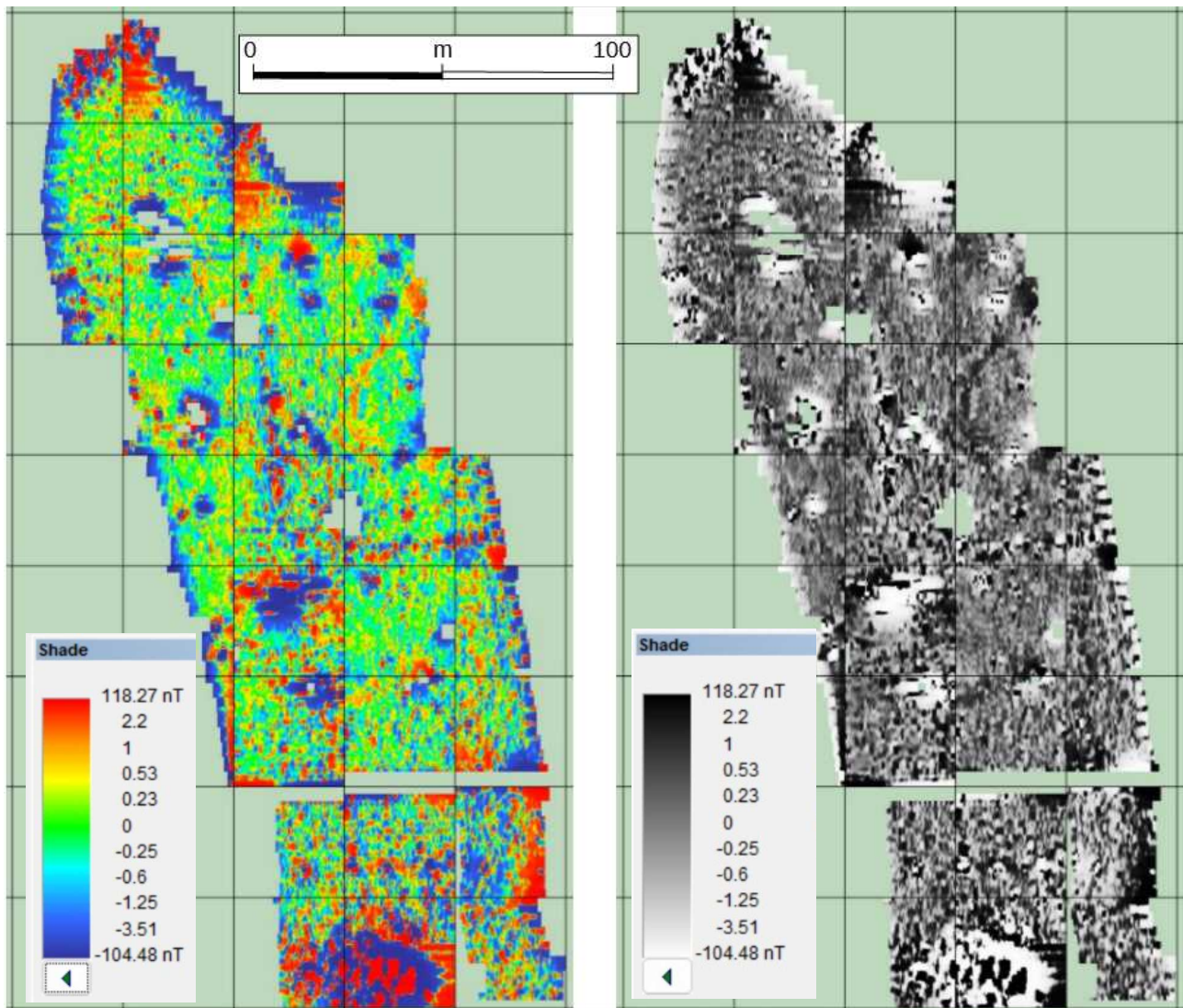


Fig 8: Gradiometry results, field Crossman 13

These results (see Fig 9 below) show various features within the field, some relating to its modern field amalgamation, but others potentially older.

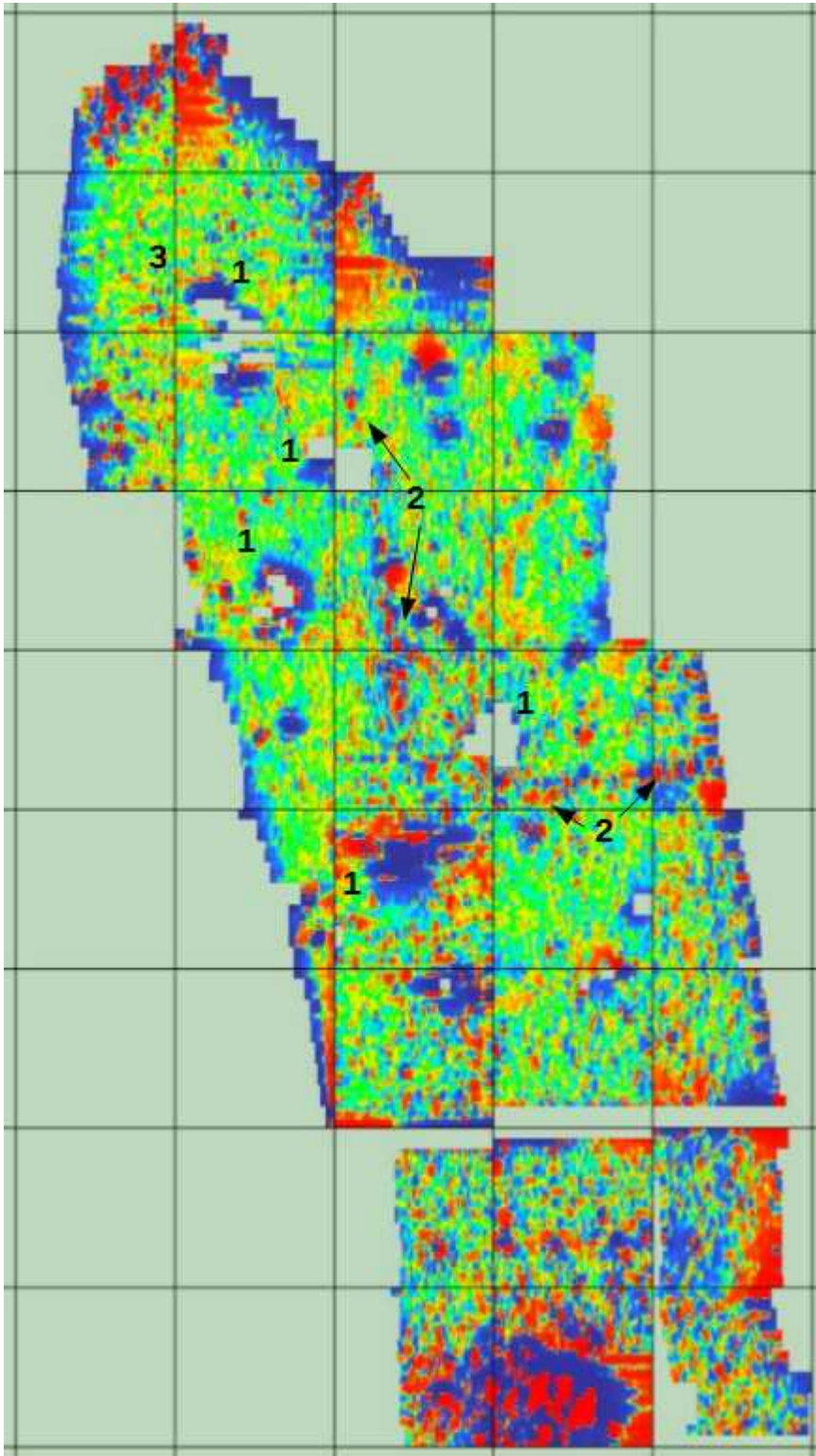
1 Refers to areas where obstructions in the field either prevented survey all together, or were composed of magnetic metal (probably various iron alloys) that swamped the machine responses

2 Infilled ditches, probably containing iron scrap, resulting from known field rearrangements in the C20. There are also linear features, some at right angles, in the lower field, but these probably represent post-medieval gripe groups, as shown clearly in the lidar survey.

3 Circular anomaly (see more clearly in the early survey, Fig 9 below) approximately 18m diameter. This is not visible as an earthwork in the high resolution lidar survey (Fig 7),

which makes it less likely to be the result of horse training (although is still a possible explanation)

The enormous dipole disturbance in the lower left of the lower field is probably due to agricultural debris, since it is close to developed land in the former 'Five Acres'.



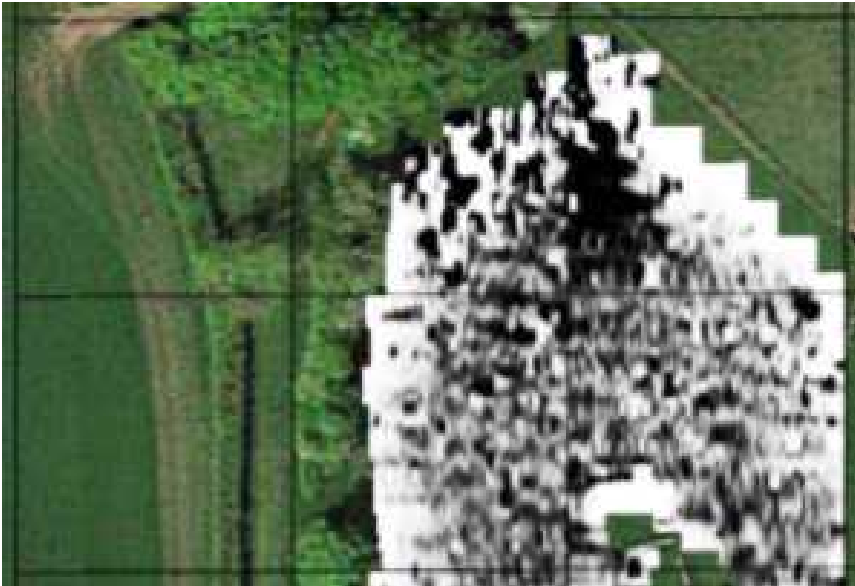
*Fig 9: Interpretation of geophysical responses*

The circular feature (see Fig 10 below) is curious.

It may only be due to use for horse training (circular training paths are not uncommon), but if not, it is just possible that this may represent some form of ringditch of earlier date, which its location might support.

The change from arable land to equitation happened 1999-2005 (Google Earth History): at least four smaller circular features are shown there on 2009-02-06, but these are probably artefacts of the complex mowing patterns necessary between the obstacles in the field.

Interestingly, there do not appear to be any geophysical records reflecting the former woodland at the extreme northern end of the site, perhaps implying this is not remnant ancient woodland - the adjacent hedges will be checked for indicators in spring 2025.



*Fig 10: sub-circular feature seen on results from February 2024*

The sub-circular feature can be clearly seen as a dark mark on Fig 10 (left). The shape of the feature looks far more likely to be a horse-training feature from this point of view, although other origins should not be ruled out entirely.

What is notable in this survey is the lack of any demonstrably Roman or medieval features, which can be clearly seen in other fields on the Ham Farm estate: this seems likely to have been due to its being a higher piece of ground that probably saw use mainly as arable for many centuries (it is still shown as such on air photographs of 1999 - Google Earth History).

## Recommendations for further work

A check of the hedges in Meadmoor Lane in the spring should clarify the woodland status of the recorded copse in 1768.

## References

Barraclough, M. 1991	<i>A history of Yatton.</i> Yatton Local History Society, Yatton <i>Also available at <a href="http://ycccart.co.uk">ycccart.co.uk</a></i>
YCCART 2017	An earthwork enclosure off Moor Lane, Yatton: geophysical surveys <i>Available at <a href="http://ycccart.co.uk">ycccart.co.uk</a></i>
YCCART 2020	Gradiometry survey at Downshills, Kenn <i>Available at <a href="http://ycccart.co.uk">ycccart.co.uk</a></i>

## Authors

Vince Russett

## Date

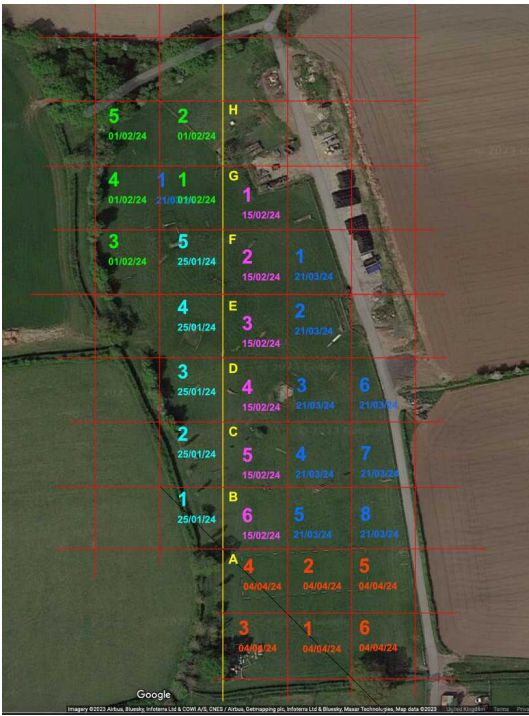
2024-12-05

## Appendix. Day Sheet extracts

Survey area		notes		readings		
Date	Grid number	size	walk direction	max	min	mean
25/01/2024		Setting out base line and grids for base line and first row				
	1	Partial M & R	W	+7.1	-100	-11.9
	2	Partial M & R	W	+14.8	-100	-2.7
	3	Partial M & R	W	+100	-100	-0.3
	4	Partial M & R	W	+100	-47.9	+2.3
	5	Partial M & R	W	+26.8	-58.8	+1.0
01/02/2024	1	30 x 30 M & R	W	+18.5	-100	-4.6
	2	Partial M & R	W	+100	-100	-12.2
	3	Partial M & R	W	+35.9	-100	-2.4
	4	Partial M & R	W	+20.2	-5.5	+6.1
	5	Partial M & R	W	+100	-100	+9.0
15/02/2024	1 ignore data	30 x 30 M & R	E	Ignore data - may have been deleted ?		
	1	30 x 30 M & R Metal from Trav 4	E	+37.5	-100	-6.3
	2	30 x 30 M & R Trav 4 Oil drum Two M & R at end	E	+85.9	-56.8	+2.2
	3	30 x 30 Mid grid series of obstacles so dummy data added	E	+56.3	-100	+1.6
	4	30 x 30 M & R Water feature so M & R	E	99.7	-34.9	+4.3
	5	30 x 30 M & R	E	+100	-100	+0.8
	6	30 x 30	E	+100	-100	+0.9
21/03/24	1	Partial M&R 2 jumps in grid	E	+21.3	-27.8	-0.5
	2	Partial M&R	E	+50.2	-28.6	+0.6
	3	Partial Reverse M&R Water jump in grid	E	+100	-100	-0.4
	4	30 x 30 M&R for one trav	E	+99.4	-100	+0.6
	5	Partial M&R Two inserts of dummy data for jumps	E	+90.1	-100	+0.1
	6	Partial M&R	E	+99.7	-20.4	+1.9
	7	Partial M&R	E	+19.9	-100	-1.8
	8	Partial M&R	E	+73.8	-100	-2.1

Survey area		notes		readings		
Date	Grid number	size	walk direction	max	min	mean
04/04/2024	1	30 x 30 Wire fence at side	W	+100	-100	-4.4
	2	Partial Wire fence at side	W	+100	-100	+3.4
	3	Partial M&R Wire fence at side	W	+100	-100	+1.9
	4	Partial M&R Wire fence at side	W	+100	-100	+4.7
	5	Partial M&R Wire fence at side	E	+99.2	-46.9	+5.7
	6	Partial M&R Wire fence at side	E	+79.2	-34.1	+4.7





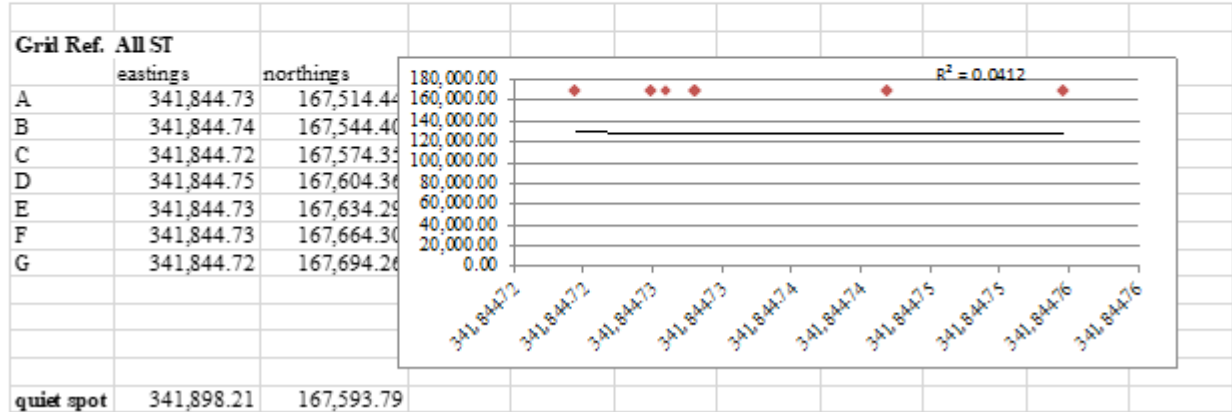
## Grid layout

Setting out detail

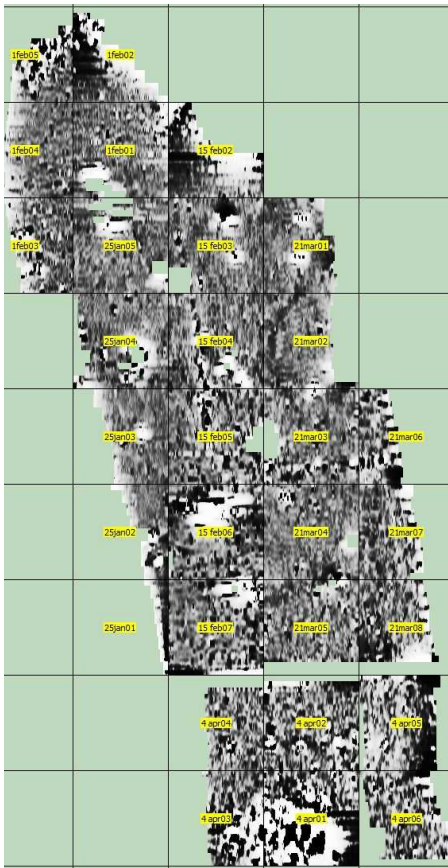
Position A –  
Position –

Position of quiet spot – 22.8m to metal gate post with one red paint spot & 20.6m to wooden post (tenth post south from gate) with two paint spots

E350657.3 N159178.5



## GPS



**TerraSurveyor grids**