

YCCCART 2017/Y2

Yatton & Congresbury Wildlife Action Group

**A Documentary & Archaeological Survey Of Two
Moorland Sites In Yatton & Congresbury**

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***YCCCART is very grateful to Richard Broomhead
for permission to publish this report online.***



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1.0.0 Summary

- 1.0.1** *Documentary research into two fields, one owned and one managed by the Yatton & Congresbury Wildlife Action Group in the parishes of Yatton and Congresbury for the purposes of wildlife enhancement and the preservation floral diversity has provided evidence of their past tenure, land use and field names. The widening of an existing ditch and the excavation of a new pond within the field in Yatton Parish also produced evidence of Romano-British activity and structural materials probably associated with occupation.*

2.0.0 Introduction

2.0.1 The following report describes the results of documentary research and an archaeological examination of two moorland sites in the parishes of Yatton and Congresbury. The site in Yatton is owned by North Somerset Council and managed by the Yatton & Congresbury Wildlife Action Group whilst the Congresbury site has been in the ownership of the Yatton & Congresbury Wildlife Action Group since September 1999

2.0.2 The survey was commissioned by Mr T. Moulin on behalf of the Yatton & Congresbury Wildlife Action Group (formerly The Friends of Biddle Street SSSI) following finds of Romano-British material in the spoil of a newly excavated pond within the Yatton site. It was conducted by R. A. Broomhead acting as Archaeological Consultant, site work being during December 1998 and documentary research at various dates in 1999.

3.0.0 The Sites

3.1.0 Location

3.1.1 The two sites lie within close proximity and similar topographical situations within the parishes of Yatton and Congresbury. Site 1 comprises OS Parcel No. 5114 and lies to the south of the village of Yatton at ST 42486514 approximately 100m south west of Rectory farm from which it is separated by the course of the former Cheddar Valley Railway. Site 2 comprises OS Parcel No. 7757 and lies in the northern part of Congresbury Moor immediately west of the former Cheddar Valley Railway at ST 42756455

3.2.0 Topography & Land Use

3.2.1 Site 1 forms a small trapezoid shaped enclosure lying at between 6m and 7m OD and measuring 0.316ha. It comprises rough grassland bounded on the west and north by a deep, continuous field drain. To the south lies an embanked trackway known as the Gang Wall whilst to the north the field is enclosed by the course of the former Cheddar Valley Railway. Site 2 comprises a large rectangular enclosure measuring 4.089ha and is bounded by ditches on all sides. Site 2 also comprises rough grassland but occupies a slightly lower situation of around 5m OD.

3.3.0 Geology

3.3.1 In close proximity the two sites occupy identical geological situations The British Geological Survey (Solid & Drift Edition Bristol Sheet 264, 1974) indicates that both lie on Pleistocene Estuarine Clays. The Soil Survey of England & Wales gives more detail indicating both sites to be underlain by silty clays of the Wentloog series with slight elements of clays of the Compton Series.

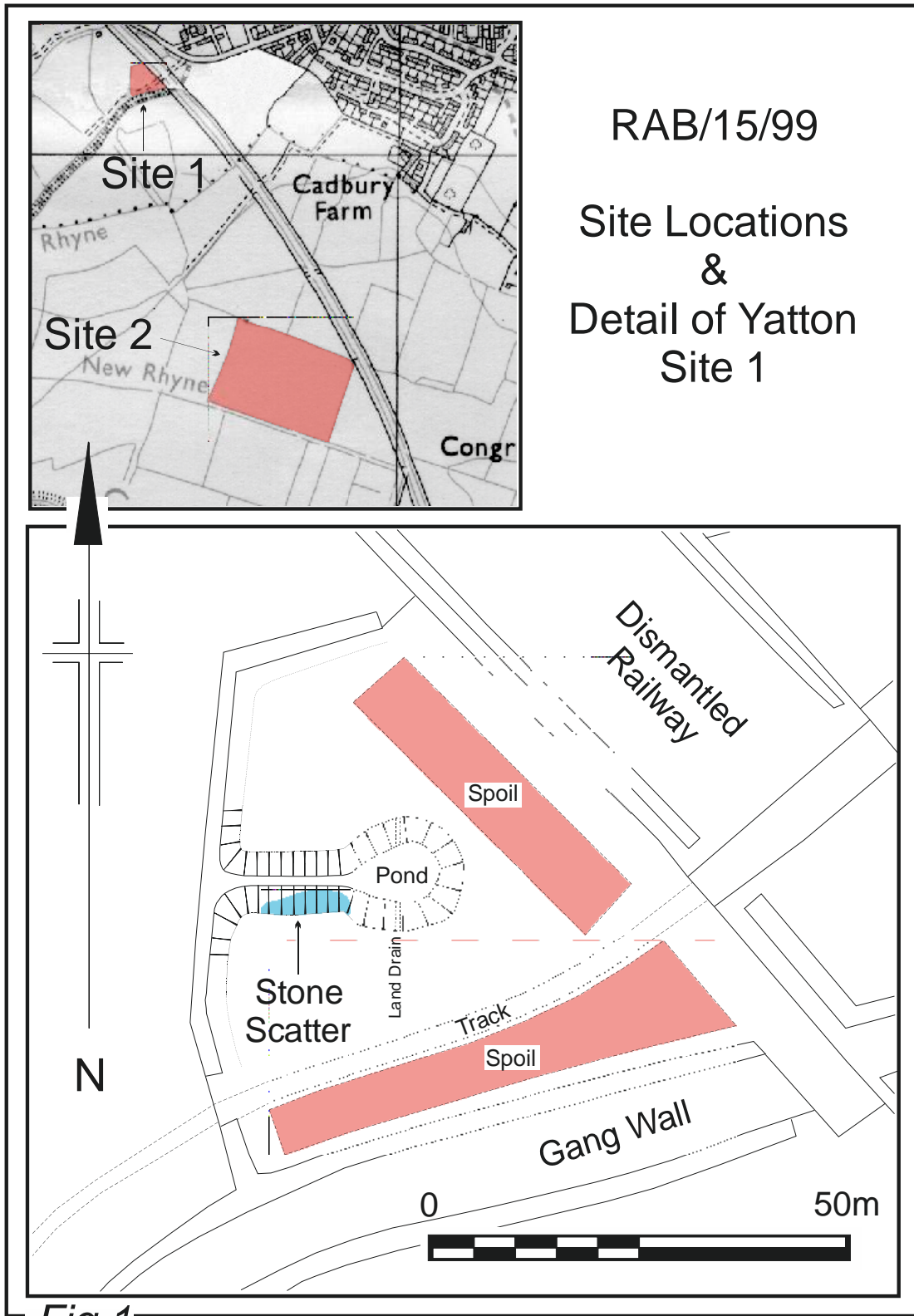


Fig 1

4.0.0 Methodology

- 4.0.1** All readily available sources of historical information relating to the two sites were consulted where possible. These included historical maps and documents held both privately and in local archives together with published information and material held on the county database (Sites & Monuments Record).
- 4.0.2** Field work in relation to Site 1 was conducted in accordance with procedures outlined in '*A General Specification for Archaeological Work in Somerset*' (SCC March 1995). The site was surveyed at 1:200 and visible archaeological features hand cleaned and recorded photographically. A written contextual record was made using *pro-forma* record sheets under the site code RAB/15/99. All spoil heaps were scoured for artefactual material both visually and in conjunction with local metal detectorists.

5.0.0 Existing Archaeological and Documentary Evidence

5.1.0 Yatton Site 1

- 5.1.1** There is no documented record of any archaeological examination of Site 1 having been made prior to its current development and no archaeological sites or finds have been recorded within a 400m radius of the site.
- 5.1.2** The site occupies a low lying situation immediately to the north-west of a prominent embanked trackway known as the Gang Wall. The origins of this feature which remains undated are unknown however it is frequently noted in documentation of the 14th century (e.g. Lambeth Palace Court Rolls No. 1182 [1382] '*Gangewalle*') and may well have been in existence for some considerable time before this.
- 5.1.3** The earliest cartographic description of the site lies in a privately owned map thought to date from the late 18th century. At this time it comprised two parcels, Nos. 123 & 124, the former described as meadow lying 'In Tuckers Two Acres' in the possession of the executors of Samuel Wilmott. The latter is not named and its tenant is unknown. The Tithe Map of 1840 however records the name of this northern component (211) as 'Rush Croft' in the possession at this date of James Chedzoy. The southern half of the site in 1840 was divided between the glebe lands belonging to the Rev. D. M. Clark (210) and land belonging to a Mrs Norman (209). All are described as being of meadow or pasture. Of further interest is the field name 'Well Paddock' applied both in the late 18th and early 19th centuries to the enclosure to the west of the site.
- 5.1.4** The construction of the Cheddar Valley Railway link between 1867 and 1869 bisected the early enclosure reducing its area by approximately a half. In more recent times the field has been subject to dumping and has had a trackway comprising rubble hardcore constructed across it.

RAB/15/99 Yatton Site 1 - Historical Detail

A historical map from the late 18th century showing land parcels. The map is hand-drawn on aged paper with various colored inks. Several parcels are labeled with numbers in red ink, including 123 and 124. Other visible numbers include 108, 107, 106, 105, 104, 103, 102, 101, 100, 99, 98, 97, 96, 95, 94, 93, 92, 91, 90, 89, 88, 87, 86, 85, 84, 83, 82, 81, 80, 79, 78, 77, 76, 75, 74, 73, 72, 71, 70, 69, 68, 67, 66, 65, 64, 63, 62, 61, 60, 59, 58, 57, 56, 55, 54, 53, 52, 51, 50, 49, 48, 47, 46, 45, 44, 43, 42, 41, 40, 39, 38, 37, 36, 35, 34, 33, 32, 31, 30, 29, 28, 27, 26, 25, 24, 23, 22, 21, 20, 19, 18, 17, 16, 15, 14, 13, 12, 11, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.

Left: The site in the late 18th Century. (Nos. 123 & 124)

Right: Yatton Tithe Map 1840. The site Nos. 209, 210 & 211

A black and white line drawing of a tithe map from 1840. It shows several land parcels outlined in black. Three parcels are specifically labeled with numbers: 209, 210, and 211. Other parcels are labeled with numbers like 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300.

A black and white line drawing of a 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map from 1886. It shows a network of roads and land parcels. Two parcels are specifically labeled with numbers: 1453 and 1454. Other parcels are labeled with numbers like 1455, 1456, 1457, 1458, 1459, 1460, 1461, 1462, 1463, 1464, 1465, 1466, 1467, 1468, 1469, 1470, 1471, 1472, 1473, 1474, 1475, 1476, 1477, 1478, 1479, 1480, 1481, 1482, 1483, 1484, 1485, 1486, 1487, 1488, 1489, 1490, 1491, 1492, 1493, 1494, 1495, 1496, 1497, 1498, 1499, 1500.

Left: The site in 1886 (1st Edn. OS Map. Parcel Nos. 1453 & 1454)

Fig 2

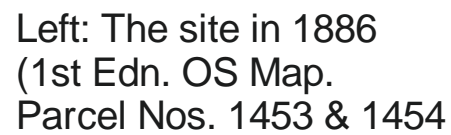
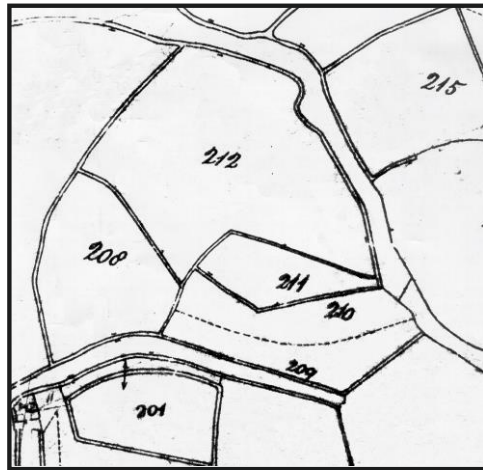
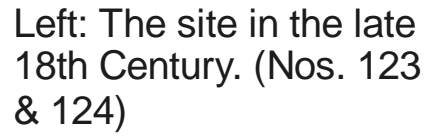


Fig 2.

5.2.0 Congresbury Site 2

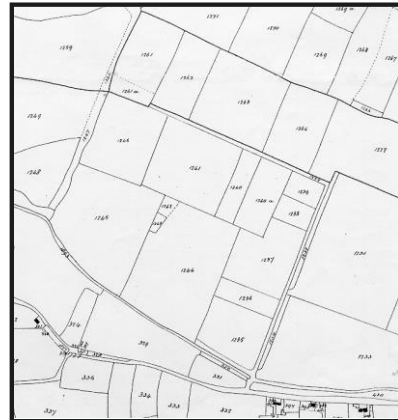
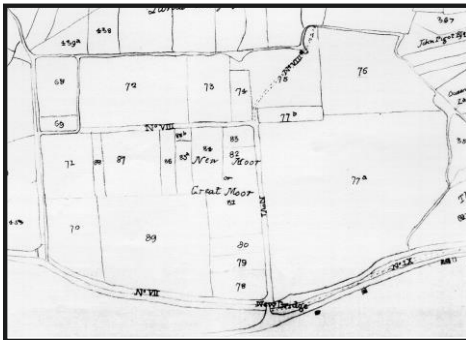
- 5.2.1** Site 2 lies within that area known as The New, The Great or The North Moor of Congresbury. References to the driving of cattle from or onto the moor can be noted in medieval documentation however it is only in the 16th century that its status is clearly defined in a survey of 1567 which states: “item: that theare belongeth to the sayde Manor one Common more Called the Northe More wherein the Tennannts afore sayde of the same Mannor hathe theyr Common of pasture as apertenannte to their Tenures” (BRO 04235)
- 5.2.2** The first visual depiction of the moor is by the surveyor I. I. DeWilstar in his survey of lands in Congresbury belonging to Queen Elizabeth’s Hospital of Bristol in 1736 (BRO 33041 BMC4/PL1). This depicts the moor as an open common bounded to the south by the Congresbury Yeo, to the east by lands known as Cow Leaze and The Hurst, to the north by the irregular Hurst Pool Rhine and to the west by an ancient trackway called “Waterlands Way” and an enclosure known as “New Croft”. The same plan also indicates the presence of a substantial Lake in the centre of the moor to the south of the area of Site 2 and of an access point onto the site almost certainly via a bridge, from the lands of Capt. Webb to the north.
- 5.2.3** The creation of Site 2 stems from the Congresbury Enclosure Award of 1813 – 1814 which allotted the entire area of Site together with other lands to William Codrington of Wroughton in consideration of his giving up six former common tenements known as ‘Old Austers’ – a common Somerset term for ancient tenements with common rights. In 1824 the land was in the possession of Mr J. Miles esq. but by 1840 it is depicted as having been divided into two enclosures both in the occupation of John Fisher. This situation does not appear on the ground however for the first edition OS map of 1886 maintains the impression of a single enclosure. It remains unknown when the north – south ditch across the western side of the field was dug as it is not shown on any published plan. It is however visible on photographs taken by the RAF in 1946 (CPE/UK 1869 No. 3153).

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Congresbury Site 2 - Historical Detail



Above: The Great Moor in 1736 prior to enclosure



Above left: Enclosure (Plot 72) 1813.

Above right: Tithe Map 1840
Nos. 1262 & 1263



Left: 1st Edition OS 1886
Parcel Number 625

Fig 3

6.0.0 Archaeological Survey

6.1.0 Site 1

6.1.1 As part of the management design for Site 1, the existing ditch which bisected the site and which had been subject to prior tipping was cleared by machine and a pond mechanically excavated at its eastern end in order to facilitate the sites wildlife and ecological potential. Displaced spoil was noted to contain substantial quantities of pottery which was collected and later identified as being Romano-British in origin.

6.1.2 A detailed search of the spoil heaps and of the excavated area was conducted under archaeological supervision and led to the recovery of further quantities of Romano-British pottery and of a number of Romano-British coins and other fragments of metalwork. Stonework was also noted in the southern face of the newly excavated ditch. This was cleaned by hand, its location surveyed and the feature recorded photographically. Romano-British pottery and animal bone was recovered *in-situ* from amongst the stone which comprised rounded and angular limestone and conglomerate rubble (some burnt) up to 200mm lying within a matrix of dark orange or grey/brown clay, above blue/grey clay with some charcoal and sealed by less than 150mm of topsoil.

6.1.3 No clearly structural features were observable with the possible exception of a slight concentration of stonework at the eastern end of the ditch. Several large (300mm – 400mm) faced stones were also noted and these together with the presence of animal bone and the significant quantities of pottery recovered would appear to be suggestive of occupation either on or in close proximity to the newly excavated ditch and pond.

6.1.4 A stone structure bisected by the newly dug pond and visible in its northern and southern faces was identifiable as a post medieval land drain.

6.2.0 Site 2

6.2.1 A detailed archaeological survey of Site 2 was not made although the excavation of new drainage was observed. Note was made of laid stonework in the north western corner of the site at ST 42706468 marking the probable site of the bridge recorded on the DeWilstar map of 1736. Advice was given to retain the profile of Hurst Pool Rhine whose irregular shape is shown to have existed in the 18th century.

RAB/15/99 Site 1 Detail of stone feature



Left: Structural stone visible in southern face of excavated ditch. Scale 1m.

Above: Edge of stone feature in southern face of excavated ditch. Scale 1m.

7.0.0 Finds

7.0.1 All finds are related to Site 1. No archaeological material was derived from site 2.

7.1.0 Pottery

7.1.1 All the pottery removed from Site 1 is considered to be unstratified although a small quantity was recovered during the cleaning of the stonework within the side of the ditch. All pottery has been cleaned and quantified by type and weight. Grey Wares, all of local (Congresbury) origin formed the bulk of the finds. A total of 257 sherds weighing 3.29kg being examined. Black Burnished Wares, all of type BB2 comprised a further third of the finds with 126 sherds weighing 1.605kg. 26 sherds of other pottery types were recovered including 10 of Samian (with one name stamped base) weighing 55g, Two New Forest Colour Coated sherds (20g) and 14 miscellaneous sherds of unidentifiable fabrics weighing 305g were also retained.

7.2.0 Lead

7.2.1 Ten fragments of lead weighing a total of 170g were recovered by metal detectorists. The lead included a pot repair piece and a strap with traces of blue paint of unknown date.

7.3.0 Coins

7.3.1 Eleven bronze disks all assumed to be coins were recovered but none was identifiable. One possible silver (?) coin badly corroded and buckled was also found.

7.4.0 Other Objects

7.4.1 An iron broach pin of Romano-British date was recovered by metal detectorists together with an unidentified bronze object of unknown function and date. A fragment of blue green bubble rich glass recovered from the spoil heap is also considered to be Romano-British.

7.5.0 Building Materials

7.5.1 Worked stone was not retained but its presence has already been noted in **6.0.3** (Above). Several fragments of pennant tile were observed together with a little baked clay daub.

7.6.0 Bone

7.6.1 Bone though noted was not retained.

8.0.0 Discussion

- 8.0.1** Both sites 1 and 2 have occupied similar pastoral situations for a considerable period of time and it is unlikely that either has been subject to any significant ploughing. Whilst there is little information relating to Site 1 in Yatton it is highly probable that its irregular boundaries in common with many others on these moors are of a late medieval date. Conversely the regular boundaries of Site 2 are characteristically and demonstrably of recent origin.
- 8.0.2** The presence of potential structural material together with substantial quantities of Romano-British pottery strongly suggests the existence of an occupation site of this period adjacent to the newly dug pond and ditch in Site 1. It is also possible that the excavation of the pond and ditch, which was not archaeologically monitored, led to the destruction of one or more features of this date.
- 8.0.3** An absence of environmental material from Site 1 precludes a detailed examination of its nature. Both arable and pastoral usage may be envisaged for this area in the Romano-British period and quantities of animal bone may suggest the latter. Whatever the sites status it is highly probable that any occupation site here would have been tenurially tied to the Wemberham villa site 1km to the west.

References

Original Documents, Maps & Plans.

Site 1 – Yatton

A Map Land in the Manor of Yatton belonging to Earl Poulett (18th Century)
Privately owned by Mr B. Crossman of Hewish.
DD/PT Box 47: Schedule relating to the above. Somerset Records Office
Yatton Tithe Map & Award 1840: Somerset Local History Library
Ordnance Survey First Edition 1886: Somerset Local History Library

Site 2 – Congresbury

A survey of the Manor of Congresbury 1567: BMC 04235 Bristol Records Office
A Plan of Lands in Congresbury 1736: BMC 33041 4/PL1 Bristol Records Office
Congresbury Enclosure Award 1813: Somerset Records Office
Congresbury Tithe Map & Award 1840: Somerset Records Office
Ordnance Survey First Edition 1886: Somerset Local History Library

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Tony Moulin for instigating this survey and for his co-operation and enthusiasm for the work. Brian Bradbury and Yatton Local History Society provided many volunteers to help collect pottery from the spoil. Thanks are also due to Tim Phillips and Kieth Usher who metal detected the site.