

discovery is frequently the only indicator that people were active in the area, although regrettably there is nothing to indicate whether they were lost or abandoned at a kill site or camp site. Discoveries from cave sites, which may contain associated faunal and palaeo-environmental evidence as well as material demonstrating a broad range of human activities, frequently command greater attention; however it is discoveries of the type made at Winscombe that supply evidence of 'open-air' occupation and exploitation of the broader landscape and river systems.

Thanks are offered to Mandy Brading for reporting the discovery; it is currently retained in her possession. Thanks are also due to Linda Coleman of Wessex Archaeology for having prepared Fig. 2.

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PHIL HARDING AND MICK ASTON

PREHISTORIC STANDING STONES IN BANWELL

Resistivity surveys were carried out at the sites of two prehistoric standing stones in the parish of Banwell. The Yarborough Stone is a single surviving orthostat lying immediately south of Yarberry Farm at NGR ST 390 578. It is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (NMR 22810), with the scheduled area describing a circle with a radius of 5m around the stone. On a previous field visit, one of the writers (NJC) had noted what appeared to be a heavily truncated, but nonetheless distinct, mound and a possible ditch immediately east of the stone, which appeared to stand in the western arc of the putative ditch. Arising from this observation, in October 2008, an area around the stone was targeted for both

standard zig-zag and cross-section survey, the former method using a TR/CIA Meter twin probe array. Three 20m grids were set out, only one of which was complete, the second curtailed to the east by a ditch, the third curtailed to the west by a ditch and with a 10m by 10m space around the stone to avoid encroaching on the Scheduled Monument. All the geophysical work was planned and supervised by BS.

The survey suggested the existence of what appears to be an artificial mound, c. 7m in diameter, surrounded by a ditch some 15m east of the standing stone. The results are consistent with this being a barrow, which the builders so sited as to deliberately incorporate the standing stone in the western part of the ditch.

Another survey, using the same equipment and techniques, was carried out in January 2009, on the site of a second stone, also, it is assumed, a single orthostat, which lies just under 400m east of the Yarborough Stone, at NGR ST 394 579. This stone is now lost, although it is not clear exactly when it was removed. It is shown as still present on the OS 6" map of the 1880s, and the North Somerset HER reports that it is also depicted on the revised OS 6" sheet of the early 1960s (NSHER 108). However, if this is correct, then the OS map is in error, because in 1954, Hunt explicitly remarked that the stone 'has now been removed' (Hunt 1954, 28). In any event, the zig-zag and cross-section resistivity surveys conducted at the site of this stone appeared to reveal what may be a large socket hole at a depth of about 1.2m. This is not unexpected, as the field in which the stone lay has been regularly ploughed in recent times, and this depth may represent the build-up of a modern colluvial layer, only a few decades old, over the stone's former location. To the east of this an oval feature some 24m by 10m is delineated by high resistance, as well as a straight line thought to be a modern land drain. These results may be consistent with the existence of a second previously unrecorded barrow, which, as at Yarborough, appears to have a direct relationship with the (presumably earlier) orthostat.

We should also note that both stones, occupying as they do positions on the north side of the Lox Yeo Valley, lie along the line of a clear east-west

'ecotone' – a resource boundary between the arable farmland on which they were actually sited, and the low-lying valley marshland immediately downslope to the south.

Taken together as a small but related group in relatively close proximity, these two sites clearly require additional research, which might include an examination of LIDAR data and test auguring. In the final analysis however, archaeological excavation, even of limited scope, would be needed to confirm the date and nature of these previously unsuspected features.

The writers would like to thank the respective landowners for their kindness, co-operation and interest in allowing the surveys to take place: at Yarborough, Mrs Susan Griffin of Yaberry Farm; and at the second stone, Mr Simon de Shapland, of Knoll Hill Farm; and also the group of enthusiastic and hardy helpers who turned out twice in freezing weather to assist with the work, and without whom it could not have taken place. The full reports of both surveys have been deposited in the North Somerset HER.

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THE STORY OF A STONE ADZE FROM WINSCOMBE PARISH

In January 2009 a polished stone adze was found by Steven Bridges and Stewart Smith at Hillcrest Cottage, Hillyfields, in Winscombe parish, at a depth of c. 0.1m while digging a posthole for a side entry to the property. The find spot is at approximately ST428576 on the end of a westward projecting spur with valleys with streams to north and south. The local geology is Dolomitic Conglomerate. The find spot was formerly in what is locally called Observatory Field, after an astronomical observatory used by the nearby Sidcot School, but part of the field was added to the finder's property some years ago. The topographical position with good views all round suggested initially that the adze might be from a Neolithic settlement on the end of the spur but local search of soil failed to locate any other finds such as flints.

The adze was taken to the County Museum in Taunton in January where Steve Minnitt raised doubts about the adze suggesting it might be a modern ethnographic import. Luckily the South-West Implement Petrology Group met at Taunton in late January and the adze was taken and shown to the assembled experts. There Roger Taylor (of Exeter) and others confirmed that it was most likely an import from abroad, and probably from the South Pacific. The adze was sent to be examined by Tony Eccles of the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, an expert on ethnographic material. He confirmed this it is of volcanic stone and almost certainly a Pacific island, probably Polynesia, where such items were used until recently as high status gifts and for wood working and boat building.