

Shorter papers

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SHORTER PAPERS

NEW RADIOCARBON DATES FOR SITES AROUND WELLS

Barry Lane

Many of the important archaeological archives held by Wells & Mendip Museum were acquired before the invention of scientific dating methods, but are now able to be reassessed. Using a Maltwood Fund grant, under the SWARF Research Aim 11: *to improve knowledge and study of under-utilised museum collections*, Wells museum commissioned six new radiocarbon dates of human and other bones from four local sites. Most produced rather surprising results, and different from the dates originally suggested by Curator Herbert Balch (1869–1958).

The first set of three dates were obtained from the Museum’s most famous exhibit, the bones of the so-called “Witch of Wookey Hole”. The cave was excavated in 1908–12 by Balch and his results published in 1914 (Balch 1914) at which time the

skeleton was described as that of a ‘Goatherd’, and the items found associated with her as the ‘Goatherd’s Relics’. The skeleton only became that of a witch at the time that the show cave of Wookey Hole was first opened to the public in 1926. When found the bones were disarticulated a metre or more down in a rift beside the cave wall. The location was illustrated in Balch’s 1914 book and is shown here. The bones of the “witch” are shown schematically (Fig. 2) on the left (west) side of the section. Most of the other finds described later were also found around this area.

Jackie McKinley of Wessex Archaeology visited the Museum in August 2013 to take bone samples and, on the basis of measurements taken on the humerus and scapula, assessed the skeleton as probably that of a male aged c.25–35 years old. The

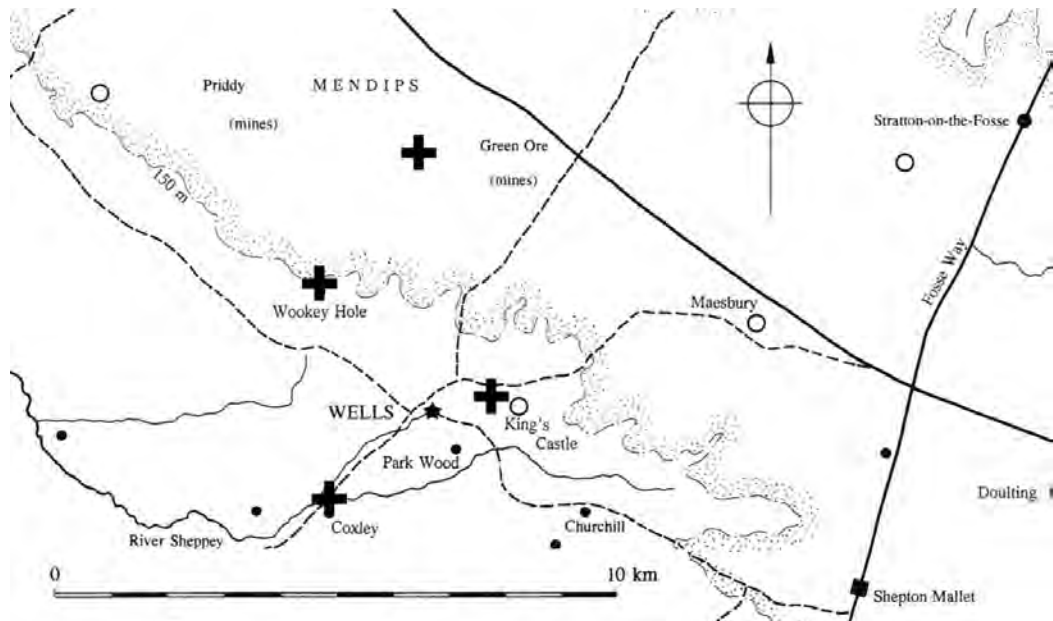


Fig. 1 Location of the sites around Wells, marked with bold crosses, where the dated bones were found. Adapted from an outline map of the Roman topography of the Wells area in Rodwell (2001, Fig. 41).

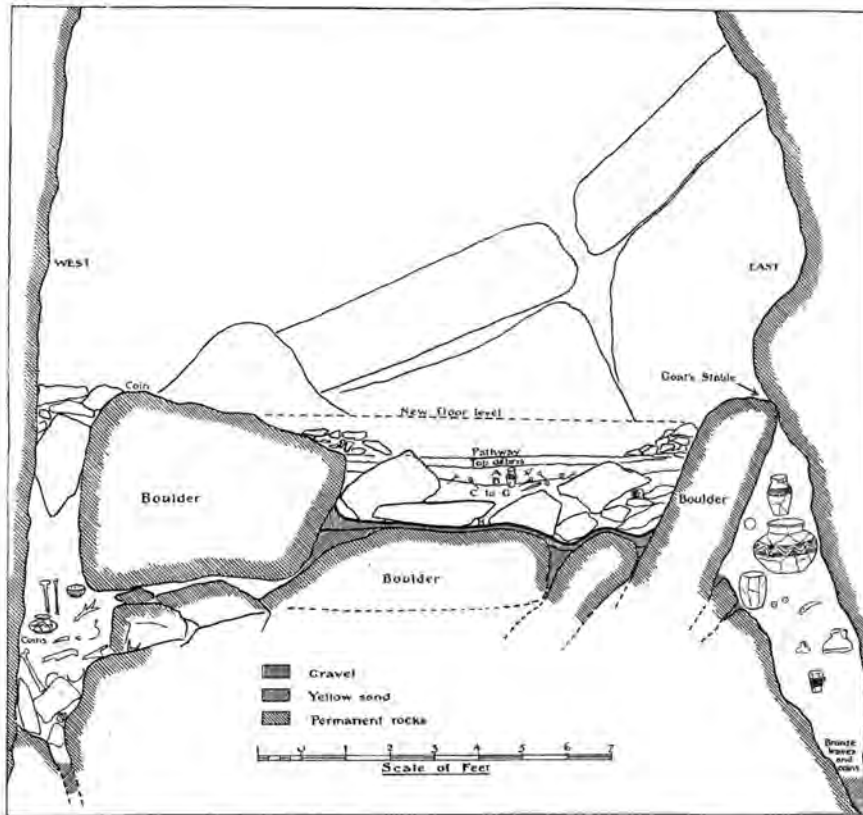


Fig. 2 Plate XIXa, from Balch 1914, p89, showing the location of the human bones schematically by a long bone in the left hand rift.

man's left femur was of Iron Age date (393–206 cal BC), while his left humerus was of the Roman period (180–381 cal AD). Furthermore one of the “associated” goat’s skulls was post-Roman at 684–881 cal AD.

When excavated Balch noted that the skeleton was missing its right femur, which was later found some 20 feet away (Balch 1929, 48). However in 2012 one of the Museum volunteers spotted that Balch’s display of the witch’s bones, probably created when the Museum opened in 1932, had his legs the wrong way around! So the left femur that has been dated to the Iron Age period may well be the femur that was found some distance away from the main group of bones. This might suggest that most of the skeleton is probably of Roman date, rather at odds with the associated Iron Age finds such as the so-called ‘milking pot’ and carved bone weaving comb. Recently a letter has come to light written by Professor Tratman in 1958 to Wing

Comdr. G. W. Hodgkinson, owner of the cave, suggesting that “It might also be profitable to do some more digging at the site where the remains of the goatherds (sic) were found. At least two persons are represented by the bones discovered by Mr Balch.” It does not appear that Mr Balch ever acknowledged this information.

The Iron Age date of 393–206 cal BC for one of the human bones corresponds well with that of the founding of the nearby Glastonbury Lake Village (Coles 1982, 37).

Only one other item from the cave, a copper alloy pin, was assigned by Balch to the post-Roman or Saxon period. However it is more likely to be Roman (Laura Burnett, pers.comm). Part of a medieval globular cooking pot of late Saxon and Norman type of the 11th to 12th century was later found in the river in Chamber 2 in the 1940s (Mason 1951).

It may be significant that the Roman burials found in Chamber 4 of the cave during excavations

there in 1973–76 were dated to about 275 AD on the basis of a small group of fifteen Roman *antoniniani* probably deposited in a small leather bag or purse (Boon 1978). None of the bones from those burials has been radiocarbon dated; they are not held at Wells & Mendip Museum. However the date of the witch's humerus is closely comparable. While Balch's story about the goatherd, and later the witch, can now no longer be upheld, it must be remembered that he was excavating in very difficult spaces and in the dark with only an acetylene lamp. It is also a shame that he went into print with the clear statement that ". . . it is now obvious that the Cave folk did not bury their dead in the Cave" (Balch 1914, 85). Clearly a major re-evaluation of all the finds from Wookey Hole Cave is required.

Recent research related to other finds from the cave supports such a claim. A cursory glance at the collection of 100+ coins found strongly suggests a late 4th century votive deposit (Laura Burnett, pers. comm), as also do the several Iron Age "currency bars". A recent study by Richard Hingley (1990) concluded that "the majority of currency bars were deposited as part of acts of ritual". Balch's discovery of six small bronze leaves from an area close to where the "witch's" bones were found has been overlooked. He ventured that they were "*no doubt forming a personal ornament*". Bronze or silver leaves, of various sizes, have since been recorded at four other sites – at the excavated pagan temples at Uley, Glos., Lydney, Glos., Woodeaton, Oxon., and Lamyatt Beacon, Somerset. Wookey Hole has not been included with this group before and the bronze leaves, along with the deposited Roman coins, clearly suggest pagan religious activity in the cave. Ann Woodward also adds that officiants at such Celtic ceremonies are quite likely to have been female! (Woodward, 51). Could this be the origin of the legend of the 'Witch of Wookey'?

Balch also recorded an iron latch lifter from his excavations and explained it was probably used to open the wooden gate at the entrance palisade, but another latch-lifter was found amongst the burials in Chamber 4 (Hawkes et al.). A carved stone ball about 75mm in diameter was described in Balch's colleague Troup's notebook simply as "A large round pestle stone of stalagmite". Actually it is gypsum, which is translucent, and far too soft to have ever been used as pestle. Carved stone balls are not uncommon on prehistoric sites but a survey in 1977 of about 400 examples, largely from Scotland and Neolithic/Bronze Age in date concluded that there was not enough contextual

evidence yet to decide whether they were ritually deposited or not (Marshall)! Finally, in the Masons' excavations in the streambed of the cave in 1948 a 3-4th century Roman lead or pewter jug was found with Roman & medieval pottery, 17th century wine bottles, and many human bones (Mason E.J. and Mason D. 1951). An almost identical jug was found in the Sacred Spring of the goddess Sulis Minerva in Roman Bath in the 1870s where it may have been used to pour water from the sacred spring or offerings of wine to the goddess (Cunliffe 1988). Another very similar jug was found beside a spring in East Harptree in the 1860s and it was filled with a hoard of about 1500 silver coins dating from c.376AD (Evans, 1867).

The Museum also holds an almost complete skeleton of a young person from Priddy. In a paper that Balch read to the Society of Antiquaries on 23 March 1911 he reported "Whatever method of washing [of lead ore] has been in operation through all these centuries, in every case a considerable amount of finer material has passed away to the swallets, as was shown at St. Cuthbert's Lead Works in 1908, when the removal of seventeen feet of deposit exposed an original swallet in the bottom of the valley. Near the base of this deposit, too, was found in the same year the skeleton of a woman, with plaited tresses of hair intact, and with it were four decorated glass beads of Celtic type." (Balch 1911). Unfortunately these beads were recorded as lost by 1914. Later Balch noted "The colour of the hair was black, and around the neck had been worn a grass plait on which were a few beads of varying size and colour. The body had been weighted by a stone to which it was tied by twisted fibre, fragments of which I have. It was probably a case



Fig. 3 Plaited tress of hair, found with the skeleton at Priddy, showing style of hair-dressing. Photograph by Steve Tofts 2015.

of murder.” (Balch 1914, 124 fn2). Fragments of the twisted fibre have recently been identified with the bones in the collection. Once again Balch’s memory is at fault! The *Wells Journal* reported this find on 19 July 1906 and later that year the story appeared in the press in Exeter, Plymouth, Nottingham and as far afield as Lancashire. Those reports all record five glass beads!

Balch had assigned a date of about 100 BC to the skeleton on the basis of the glass beads. The radiocarbon date of 148 BC–58 cal AD, obtained from her left tibia, confirms her late Iron Age date.

The possibility that this was an example of a ritual killing, or at least a special burial has been investigated by Dr Linda O’Connell and Professor Margaret Cox. In the report on the skeletal remains O’Connell concluded that there was no evidence to suggest the cause of death, nor for the sex of the juvenile aged 11–12 years (O’Connell 2015). Balch must have assumed that the skeleton was that of a young woman from the plaited hair and beads!

On 16 January 1925 the following report appeared in the local paper, the *Wells Journal*, “Skeleton of Woman Unearthed. During excavation on Friday in connection with the enlargement of the seventh green of the Wells Golf Club, workmen unearthed the skeleton of a female who had been buried only between 18 inches and two feet beneath the surface of the ground. . . . Various surmises have been made in explanation of the discovery, one being that the find may have been the remains of a woman murdered by a highwayman in the days long ago and hurriedly buried.” Later Balch recorded “The burial of which some bones are produced was apparently a crouched burial, made, according to Mr Ham who disinterred them, with the face to the East, a usual custom. There were no associated remains and much of the body is not

recovered. There are here most of the both femurs, most of the two tibiae, with flattening characteristic of early races, a piece of an ulna, two fragments of skull, and other fragmentary remains. The clavicle shows it to have been a female, and I suspect it was a burial of an occupant of the camp above, possibly in the Bronze Age, or earlier.” (Balch 1924). In fact the radiocarbon date of the right femur was 397–209 cal BC. This Iron Age date would fit with the assumed Iron Age hillfort or defended settlement of King’s Castle on the hilltop above the burial, and less than 200m away (HER 24336).

In 1941, as part of the wartime defences against invasion, a great anti-tank ditch was dug across the fields south and east of Wells, which revealed much evidence of Romano-British settlement. Near the village of Coxley it cut through a number of human skeletons, buried in shallow graves, and with no grave furniture (Balch 1941, 9 and Wicks 1941, 26). The left femur of Skeleton 1 produced an important post-Roman radiocarbon date of 401–538 cal AD, making an unexpected but valuable contribution to the ‘Somerset in the Ages of Arthur and Alfred 400–900 AD’ project in Somerset. No other investigation has been made of this Roman site since the War.

Technical report

The radiocarbon dates were obtained as part of a collaborative project with Professor Gordon Cook of the Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre (SUERC) and Jackie McKinley of Wessex Archaeology.

Details of radiocarbon dates used in the text. Calibrated ranges are at 2 (95.4%) and were calculated with OxCal 4.2 using the probability method and the IntCal 13 calibration curve.

Lab.Ref.	¹⁴ C age BP	Cal BC/AD	Site	Context	Somerset HER
SUERC-50793	224531	393–206 BC	Wookey Hole	Human bone	24355
SUERC 50794	176027	180–381 AD	Wookey Hole	Human bone	24355
SUERC 50795	160128	401–538 AD	Coxley Great Trench	Human bone	44771
SUERC 50796	202331	148BC–58 AD	St.Cuthbert’s Swallet	Human bone	32680
SUERC 50797	226128	397–209 BC	Golf Links, Wells	Human bone	24347
SUERC 51244	123735	684–881AD	Wookey Hole	Goat skull	24355

Barry Lane, Honorary Curator, Wells & Mendip Museum
curator@wellsmuseum.org.uk

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Professor Warwick Rodwell kindly allowed the use of his map of the Roman topography around Wells, to be adapted for use here.

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COURT FARM, WOOKEY – ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT THE EPISCOPAL MOATED MANOR HOUSE

Cheryl Green with illustrations by Tara Fairclough

SUMMARY

Evaluation carried out prior to renovation works at Court Farm, Wookey, identified remains of medieval and post-medieval water management systems supplying the episcopal moated manor house. Previously unknown, extant remains include stone-lined culverts with remains of sluices. Investigations also contributed to the corpus of archaeological evidence of the surviving part

of the manor house, and recovered finds which demonstrate high status occupation into the post-medieval period.

INTRODUCTION

A programme of archaeological evaluation and limited historic building recording was carried out by Context One Archaeological Services Ltd

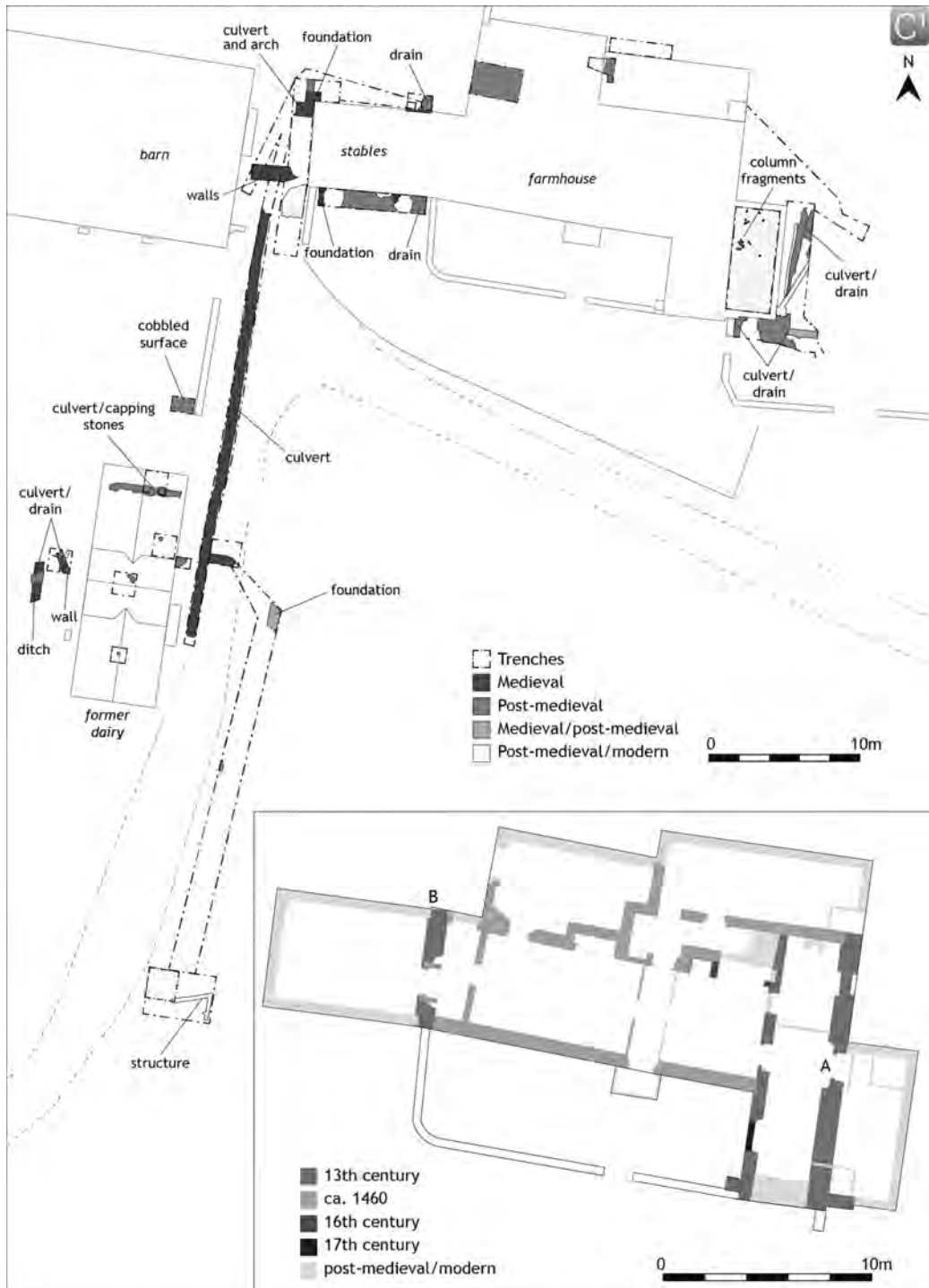


Fig. 1 Trench locations with phased & labelled principal archaeology with inset showing broad phasing of farmhouse

TABLE 1 – SUMMARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK

Date	Organisation	Type	References
1992	Wookey Local History Society	Earthwork survey	Bond 1994, 111-14
1995, 1998, 2002	N/A	Geophysical surveys	Payne 2003, 146, 147-51 Winstone 1998, 96, fig. 5
1997	Post-Excavation Services	Trenching around south & east exteriors	Leach 2003, 1
1997	Royal Commission for Historic Monuments in England (RCHM(E))	Survey of fabric of house comprising descriptive record with simple plan	Fradgley 1997
1999	Peter Leach	Two trenches excavated across moat	Leach 2000, HER 57191
2002	Peter Leach	Trench excavated along south wall of house & another trench excavated in paddock some distance to south	Leach 2002, HER 16102

(COAS) at Court Farm, Wookey, between 2012 and 2014. Court Farm is a former residence of the bishops of Bath and Wells and a Scheduled Monument (Scheduled Monument no.: SM 27961), while the extant farmhouse is a Grade II* Listed building (List entry no.: 1058584). The latter is subject to a programme of modernisation by the current owners, Mr and Mrs Moore. Archaeological investigations related to the installation of new below ground drainage and services, and minor repairs and alterations to the farmhouse. Each element of the archaeological investigations and building works were subject to Scheduled Monument consents by Historic England.

Court Farm (centred on NGR ST 51712 45769) is located in the centre of Wookey, c. 3km west of the cathedral city of Wells and c. 6.5km north-north-east of the abbey town of Glastonbury. Situated c. 2m above the valley bottom at c. 25m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), branches of the River Axe flowing westwards to the north and south of the manor. The present farmhouse represents the northern part of the medieval manor house, while most of the western and eastern ranges and the entire southern range are no longer extant. The Scheduled Area also encompasses a group of mainly 19th century farm buildings west of the farmhouse and extensive earthworks to the south. The investigations were limited to an area between the farmhouse, barn and former dairy; much of the farmhouse perimeter; limited areas within the farmhouse; and latterly in and around the former dairy (Fig 1). This was followed up in 2015 by a programme of archaeological monitoring and

recording conducted by James Brigers, relating to the conversion of the former dairy.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The detailed historical and archaeological background has been set out in grey literature reports by COAS, comprising a desk-based assessment (Tabor 2012) and two evaluation reports (Green 2015a and 2015b). Transcription of primary sources is provided by Hasler (1995), insights into the structure of the residence itself have been published by the former owner, John Winstone (1998, 2009), and a useful synthesis by Payne combines previous work and new research (2003) (see **Table 1** for summary of archaeological work in last two decades). No detailed formal programme of building recording has been conducted to date.

Bishop Jocelin (1206–42) is believed to have built the manor house in c. 1224, making it contemporary with the Bishops' Palace at Wells (Winstone 2009, 4.1), although some of the work appears to have been repair or rebuilding work of an existing building (Payne 2003, 141-42). Successive bishops utilized the manor house to varying degrees, and although major repair work was carried out in 1461-2, the registers of later bishops indicate that none of them spent any time here (*ibid.*, 140-1). In 1548 the tenure of the bishops of Bath and Wells passed to the Duke of Somerset (*ibid.*, 139), remaining in the hands of the landed gentry until the later 18th century.

The medieval precinct remains relatively intact (Fig. 3), with the manor house occupying the centre of the northern area of a moated enclosure. A

survey of 1557 suggests the manor house had four ranges enclosing a central courtyard (Payne 2003, 142). During the later 18th century the medieval chapel, gatehouse, hall, solar and barn ranges decayed and were demolished (Winstone 2009, 4.2). The surviving farmhouse has undergone little alteration, with 13th century fabric surviving at the west and east ends. This includes a two-centred archway with traces of consecration crosses on the jambs (Winstone 1998, 92) probably representing the entrance to the 13th century chapel (Fig. 1, A). Within the north elevation of the farmhouse, at the junction between the 17th century stable and the farmhouse, a fragment of vault impost (Fig. 1, B) is thought to indicate the presence of a 13th century solar over undercroft (Fradgley 1997). Excavations in 2002 to the south of the stable appear to support the presence of a west range, possibly Jocelin's great hall (Leach 2003; figs. 2a and 2b). The farmhouse retains many original features and a phased plan has been produced (Fradgley 1997) which differs slightly from a hypothetical plan by Winstone (1998, fig. 2).

WATER MANAGEMENT

Previous evidence

A reliable supply of clean water would have been essential to the efficient running of the bishop's household, providing kitchens, brew houses, cider rooms, wash houses, fish ponds, dairies and wells, in addition to keeping drains and mill streams flowing. The 1557 survey describes an enclosed yard beside the house, containing two stone fish tanks and running water (Payne 2003, 142). A conjectured plan of the precinct shows an L-shaped fishpond west of the former dairy and barn, and a further fishpond in the south-western area (Bond 1992; in Hasler & Luker 1994, 114-4) which is visible on a 1947 RAF Aerial Photograph (Fig. 3). The earthwork survey of 1992 shows slight earthwork traces of the moat and fishponds, however the 1998 geophysical survey is difficult to interpret due to disturbance from post-medieval agriculture. The course of the moat was identified east of the farmhouse, and to the south-east an area of magnetic disturbance, possibly caused by back-filling with rubble, indicates a continuation (Payne 2003, 149). Resistivity survey in 2002 appears to have picked up the rubble-filled moat in the western

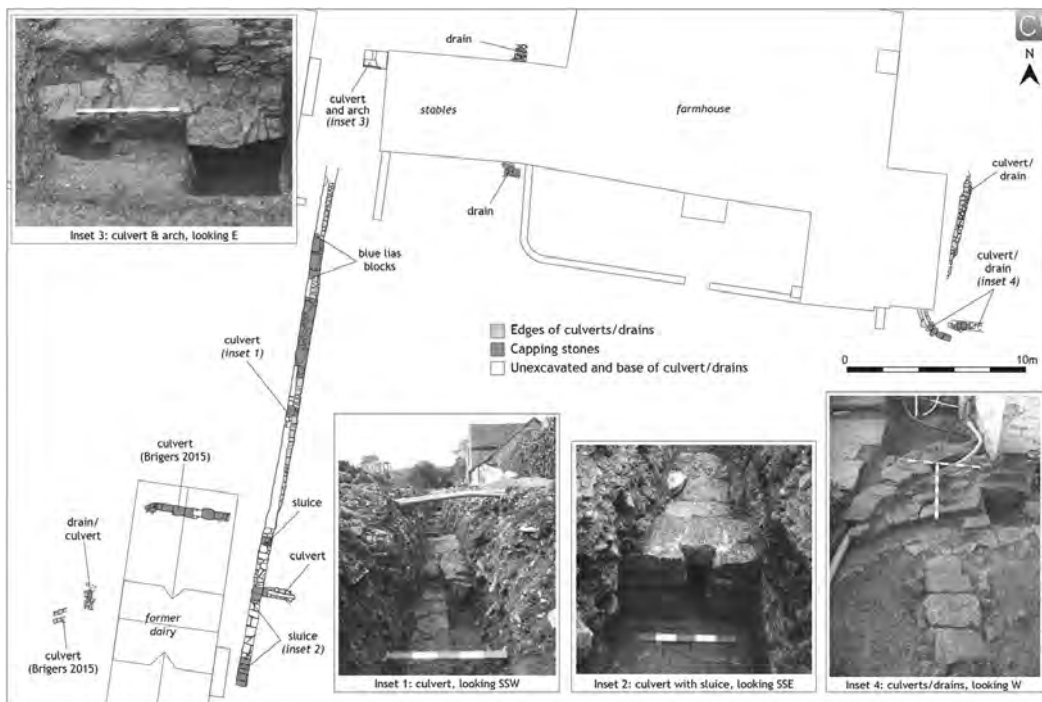


Fig. 2 Excavated culverts/drains

part of the precinct (*ibid.*, 149). While it seems likely these are medieval water management features, there is some doubt about a medieval date for the moat. Although depicted on 18th and 19th century maps, it was not described in the otherwise very thorough survey of 1557, and the moat encloses an unusually large area (5 acres) (*ibid.*, 145; after Hasler & Hasler 1994, 114). A trial excavation in 1999 to the east of the farmhouse recorded the width and depth of the moat (c. 2m) however there was no dating evidence (Leach 2000, 146).

New evidence

A culvert was found on the western side of the manor house extending for over 29m and traced as far south as the old dairy (Fig. 2). Measuring on average up to 0.30m deep and 0.30m wide internally, the walls and base were constructed of blue lias lined with clay, with blue lias and Douling stone for the capping (where this survived) (Fig. 2, Inset 1), although one reasonably large capping stone was identified as a large conglomerate (pudding stone and millstone grit). Conglomerate was also used for a smaller capping stone of a narrow drain running from the south-west into the cistern within the meadow south of the house (Stuart Moore, *pers comm.*). To the east of the dairy, the surfaces of the intact capping stones were located at c. 0.60m below the modern ground surface (c. 22.36m aOD). One section of the culvert wall was constructed of larger blocks of blue lias possibly belonging to a building foundation situated south-west of the south range site. Three sluices were recorded, two of which were well-preserved, the side walls funnelled into a narrow gap with notches on either side for a shutter (Fig. 2, Inset 2). Two of the sluices faced each other creating a small holding tank. Immediately north and downstream from two of these sluices, a smaller culvert fed into the east wall of the main culvert.

The course of the main culvert was lost within the passage between the barn and the stable due to later disturbance and the presence of collapsed blue lias walling relating to a building. Nevertheless, it seems likely a culvert identified at the northern end of the passage was a continuation, being of the same dimensions and construction. However, the culvert must have dog-legged in order to hug the western side of the medieval building. The culvert is contemporary with an arched wall found running north from beneath the stable and extending westwards over the culvert, interpreted as part of

the 13th century west range (Fig. 2, Inset 3).

West of the main culvert, the 2014 investigations discovered two capping stones beneath the old dairy, associated with a culvert measuring 0.20m wide and 0.35m deep and aligned west-north-west to east-south-east. Recent work by James Brigers uncovered a longer stretch of this culvert lined and capped with stones bonded with clay, although stratigraphically it was found to be post-medieval as opposed to the medieval date suggested by the 2014 evaluation (Brigers 2015, 22) (Fig 2). Two short stretches of another culvert or drain were found west of the dairy during both the 2014 and 2015 investigations. The section exposed in 2014 had been damaged by later services and most of the lias capping stones had collapsed. Nevertheless, it was thought to have run north to south above a wall aligned north-north-east to south-south-west. A further section of this stone-lined drain or culvert was exposed in 2015 to the south-west, revealing a north-east to south-west alignment. This ran parallel to a possible boundary wall/ drain which replaced an earlier substantial ditch that may indicate the existence of some form of medieval division (*ibid.*, 21).

At the south-east corner of the 19th century bakehouse (south of the 13th century chapel) a further stone-capped possible medieval culvert or drain was recorded running east to west. This had been cut by a post-medieval culvert or drain, sealed by post-medieval demolition deposits. A series of post-medieval culverts or drains east of the bakehouse extended across the location of the 13th century chapel, cutting the post-medieval rubble (Fig 2, Inset 4). This system comprised a lias-lined culvert, with notches at the north end suggesting a small sluice, and a second culvert flowing into a soak-away (Fig 2).

Discussion

The main south to north culvert is likely to have been the primary channel for the fresh water supply of the manor (Fig. 3). An off-shoot possibly ran north-eastwards from the main culvert to supply the eastern side of the manor house, perhaps connecting with a further culvert or drain found south of the chapel. This system may have replaced a more basic drainage system, as indicated by the substantial medieval ditch found west of the dairy. The latter was replaced by a wall and stone-lined drain or culvert, possibly representing gradual upgrading as the manor and its infrastructure developed during

the medieval period (Brigers 2015, 21). Indeed, the main culvert was a sophisticated structure perhaps providing a flushing system for a lavatory situated within the upper storey of the purported solar, the sluices and additional tributary to the south facilitating control over water flow. The few finds within the backfills indicate that the system was kept clean and fully operational until some point between the mid-17th and mid-19th centuries. Indeed, the network appears to have been expanded in the post-medieval period with a series of sluiced culverts and drains to the east of the bakehouse and a cistern (previously excavated) 40m south of the farmhouse. Adaption continued into the post-medieval period with the addition of further narrower stone-lined drains and culverts to the west of the main culvert (possibly taking water to the stone-lined pond to the west) and to the east of the manor, where small sluices were also recorded.

The main culvert was fed from the south, a very gradual fall in the ground level from south to north corresponding with the external source of water into the precinct. An old mill stream is known to have run westwards along the south side, with a known culvert bringing water towards the south-east corner of the precinct (Fig. 3). If the moat is medieval then this was presumably utilized for channelling water westwards from this culvert. Otherwise another channel must have existed to supply both the stone-lined fishpond, probably located in the south-western area of the precinct (Bond 1992; in Hasler & Luker 1994, 114-4), and the main south to north culvert. The full extent of this purported fishpond, as indicated by Tudway's

survey map of 1772 and a 1947 aerial photograph, overlaps with the conjectured southward projection of the culvert. Also, evidence for the fishpond footprint can be discerned from fragments of masonry exposed beneath the meadow (*pers comm* Stuart Moore). Critically, the water would be contaminated if it was fed from a fishpond suggesting instead that it may have been a reservoir (*pers comm* Stuart Moore) or that the culvert was fed directly from the stream.

As with monasteries, episcopal manors were cited where water could be utilized, and moats may have been a useful way of distributing water in addition to enclosing the precinct. This may certainly have been the case at the Bishop's Palace, Wells, which is surrounded by a substantial moat. There were also moats at other manors owned by the Bishop's of Bath and Wells. For example, at Chew Magna, a Buckler drawing of 1834 depicts water in the foreground which might suggest a moat (Payne 2003, 99; after Durham & Durham 1991, 24). Examples of ponds in close juxtaposition with moats are known at the favoured manor of Banwell, the 1st edition 25" OS map depicting a network of watercourses and two marshy areas which probably represent remnants of fishponds (Payne 2003, 84). At the manor of Blackford a moat enclosed a rectilinear area, with the 1st edition 6" Ordnance Survey map depicting a pond in the south-west corner (*ibid.*, 93). Generally, less is known about the culverts and drains which remain buried beneath the precincts. At Hartswell, the spring source was covered by a culvert, with lead pipes taking the water to the palace (*ibid.*, 139). At Wells, William

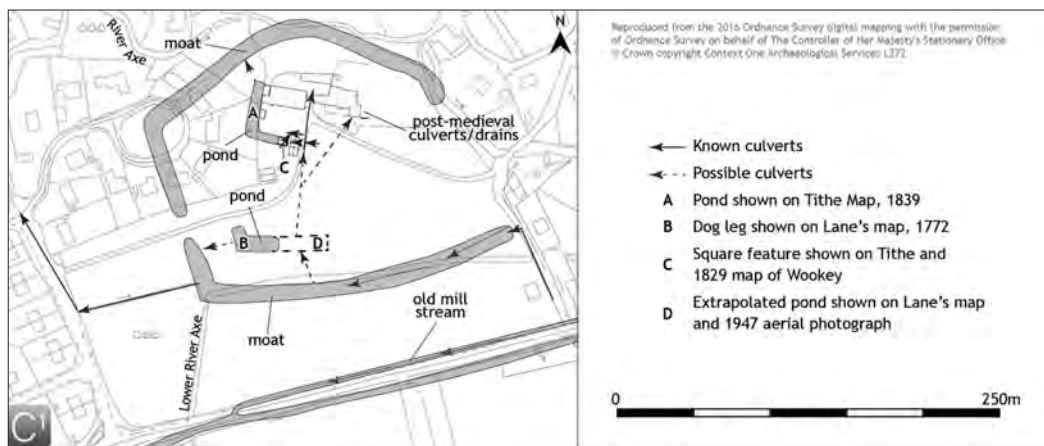


Fig. 3 External water sources and water features across precinct

Worcester writing of Bishop Thomas Bekynton (1443–1465) mentions ‘conduits of water to the kitchen, buttery cellar, bakehouse and stewponds for keeping fish’. Nearby at Glastonbury Abbey, stone-lined culverts and drains formed a complex water management system (Gilchrist and Green 2015, 78-9 & 423-431). The late 12th to mid-13th medieval culverts and drains relating to the reredorter are similar in form and size to the Court Farm culverts, both of which are lined with Blue lias. In the absence of firm dating evidence for the construction of the main Court Farm culvert, this adds weight to a medieval date.

Other significant findings

Structural remains were found associated with the 13th century west range of the manor house and the purported undercroft to the north. A modest assemblage of finds was recovered, predominantly dating to the post-medieval period but with a smaller medieval residual element including high status objects such as glazed table wares. Fragments of painted glass appear to depict a rose, later known as a ‘Tudor rose’, the visible elements indicating a 14th and mid-15th century date. As such, this is likely to have come from the north range constructed around 1460, together with part of a lead openwork window or ventilator grille of a type usually associated with high-status buildings of this period. A fragmented pair of shears possibly for sheep shearing provides a glimpse into one aspect of the activities taking place. Imported wares dated to the 16th and 17th centuries relate to occupation after the manor house passed out of ecclesiastical ownership, with a high status mid-18th century drinking glass reflecting the continued social standing of the manor house occupants.

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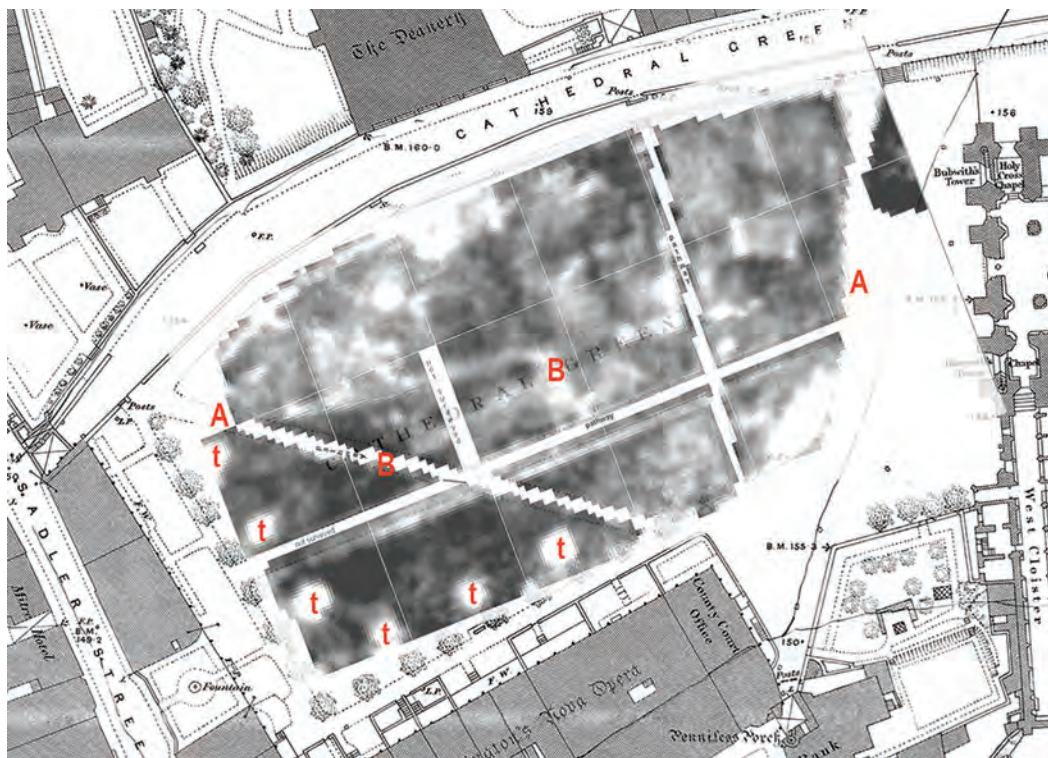
A GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY OF CATHEDRAL GREEN, WELLS 2014 PRN 32582

Barry Lane

The summer drought of 1995 revealed parchmarks in the grass of Cathedral Green, indicating otherwise invisible paths and grave plots, suggesting that archaeology had survived beneath the surface. An opportunity was taken during the 2014 Mendip Hills Festival of Archaeology to undertake a resistivity survey of the Green. This survey produced good evidence of unknown pathways, possible buildings,

and perhaps a hint of the Roman road that had been suggested by Warwick Rodwell.

The results of the survey are shown superimposed upon the Ordnance Survey Sheet XLI.5.5 surveyed in 1884 and published in 1886. High resistance areas are shown with a light tone and low resistance areas with a dark tone. There is a clear gradation in overall tone from the north east to the south west



Results of the resistance survey of Cathedral Green superimposed upon the Ordnance Survey mapping of 1884.

with the tone becoming darker towards the south west. This is almost certainly the result of the levelling of the Green in 1874, with the soil from the higher ground of the north east being removed and dumped towards the south west. The most striking and unexpected feature is the long linear high resistance line **A-A**, which is presumably a buried gravel path running from Brown's Gate in the west directly to the main central door in the West Front of the Cathedral. A small portion of this path was revealed close to Brown's Gate during the construction of a perimeter road around the west and south sides of the Green in 2008–9 (Broomhead 2009, 4). Such a path has not been found on any early maps or plans of the Green.

A second shorter linear feature **B-B** again is unknown from any mapping of the Green, except the proposed east-west Roman(?) road suggested by Warwick Rodwell (Rodwell 2001, 120-122). Its

eastern end may have been removed during the 1874 levelling and its western end buried beneath the dumped soil, where it would be below the level detectable by the resistance meter.

The final features indicated on the plan are six former tree pits marked **t** beside the perimeter roadway. A full report has been deposited with the Historic Environment Record.

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Barry Lane, Honorary Curator of
Wells & Mendip Museum

THE WINSCOMBE PROJECT 2014 AND 2015

Teresa Hall and Maria Forbes

The Winscombe Project, started by the late Mick Aston in 2009 to examine the archaeological and historical evidence for the development of the landscape of the parish (last reported in Hall and Forbes 2014, 119-20), continued through 2014 and 2015 with more documentary research and fieldwork.

The SVBRG concluded their surveys of buildings within the parish and their report was published in 2014, followed by a report on new work on the radio-carbon dating of some of the roof timbers made of elm, a type of wood that cannot be dated by dendrochronology (SVBRG 2014; Rickard 2015, 120-5). Further work on some of the later buildings of the parish is being undertaken by Dr Ann Brooks who is continuing her study of the 'villa residences' in the Winscombe and Sidcot areas of the parish.

James and Tina Bond completed a survey of the ruined water mill at Woodborough in 2014 (ST412575). To complement the survey work a test pit was dug in the area just to the west of the mill building where a small amount of medieval pottery was found. This particular mill is of interest to the project as it is mentioned in 1236 in the Dean and

Chapter records (HMC 1907, 360-1). Woodborough was held by knight service by the Malets in the 13th century, and their tenant, Henry Lovestheft, was granted access to the water rising at *Fitelewille* on Dean and Chapter land, immediately to the south of the mill, to supplement his water supply. A dispute over this right arose in the early 17th century when the owners of Maxmill, which lies further downstream, incited the tenant at *fitlinge well springinge* to knock down the 'bancke or bay of tymber' which made the water flow down an ancient watercourse supplying Woodborough Mill, and 'threatned violently to beate and intertupt whomsoever . . . shall . . . come thither with earth tymber or gravell to amende the said Bay or otherwise to sue them at lawe for entrie into the said close with multiplicite of accions untill they shall not be worth a groate'. (TNA, C2/JasI/C18/74).

Other fieldwork includes a further 31 test pits dug in 2014–15, with some of the results described below.

Max Mills ST403576. Max Mills continues to be one of the few settlement areas in the parish

(along with Barton and Winterhead) where Roman material is encountered. Of the five test pits dug in the vicinity of the mill/farmhouse three have yielded up 10th/11th century pottery. MA had speculated that this mill had been established by Glastonbury Abbey and is almost certainly on the site of that mentioned in Domesday Book (Aston et al. 2010, 66-69).

The Lynch ST418573. The Lynch is an east-west ridge of dolomitic conglomerate standing about 5-10m above the surrounding fields, with a gentle slope on the south side and a steep drop to the north. MA had identified the properties along the north side of the Lynch, that sit within the plot of land where the medieval windmill stood (Aston et al. 2010, 75-7). The windmill is mentioned in the *compotus* rolls between 1305 and 1540. Two test pits were put in the garden of one of the cottages on the windmill site. The first test pit, at the rear of the property, showed that the ground had been built up in the second half of the twentieth century to form a garden terrace. The second pit in the tiny front garden of the property produced a small amount of medieval material.

Wyke ST427580. In his 2010 article on the settlements of Winscombe, MA suggested that the field called Blunderhedge in the tithing apportionment could be the deserted settlement of Wyke (Aston et al. 2010, 60-1). Wyke occurs as one of the 'tithings' under which the *garcones* are grouped in 1330 court roll (SHC, DD/CC 131909/20), and various persons in the court and *compotus* rolls are identified as 'atte Wyke' up until 1382-3; after this date the *atte* element is dropped. MA suggested that this might be 'one of the few genuine lost early settlements in the parish' (Aston et al. 2010, 61). Both geophysical survey and earthwork survey have been carried out in the field (Aston, Forbes and Hall 2011, 193; Aston and Hall 2011, 67).

An opportunity arose in 2015 to put three test pits in the Wyke field in one of the areas identified as possible settlement remains (Aston and Hall 2011, fig.1, 67). Two of the test pits had evidence of upcast material, suggesting spoil heaps from quarrying, and the third had evidence of some sort of possible smelting operation within a shallow clay feature. Aston (Aston et al. 2010, 61) and Bond (pers. comm.) had suggested that some of the earthworks in the field may be the result of surface quarrying or mining. The Dean and Chapter manuscripts show that from 1598-1700 various persons were

granted the right to prospect for lead, 'calamint stone' and other minerals on 'the commons and waste grounds within the manors of Winscombe and Shipham' (HMC 1914, 337, 381, 412, 454, 480). This field is shown on the Enclosure map of 1799 (SHC, Q/RDe 13) and may have been a small piece of waste ground probably because the dolomitic conglomerate outcrops in part of the field which would have made ploughing difficult. Mining in Winscombe was probably ever only a relatively small enterprise: the 1691-2 Dean and Chapter accounts of Ricard Healy, communar, recorded that one John Prickman received £30 for the 'profit of lead, calamint stone and other minerals within the manor of Winscombe' (HMC 1914, 417). Lead mining is known to have taken place in the area of Woodborough Green where a c.17th-century map shows several small depictions of winding gear along the south side of the green (Aston et al. 2012, 116, 119). This small area of waste ground also appears to have been subjected to mineral prospecting in the 17th century. No pottery was found in the test pits and we hope to revisit the area in 2016 to examine other areas of the field.

Winscombe Court ST413567. The curia of the main manorial site in Winscombe is now in divided ownership. A total of 8 test pits have been dug in various properties that are thought to have been within the original curia, including within the garden of Winscombe Court itself. The test pits have produced an interesting distribution of medieval pottery with the greatest density of fine wares around the present court building, whereas one of the test pits thought to be in the vicinity of the site of the barn contained virtually all coarsewares. Some 10th/11th century fabrics were present. In the area to the north of the curia, around what is locally known as the Square, the presence of medieval pottery drops off dramatically.

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Abbreviations

HMC – Historical Manuscripts Commission
SVBRG – Somerset Vernacular Building Research Group

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