



WILTSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY FIELD GROUP

CHURCH HILL FIELD, NEWTON TONY, WILTSHIRE

Fieldwalking and metal detecting survey of Church Hill Field, Newton Tony

Report Number

2014.02

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Associated Individuals	Jim Gunter, Dan Miles
Associated Organisations -	
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Centred NGR SU2095 3983	
Administrative Areas	
Civil Parish	Newton Tony, Wiltshire
Address - None recorded	
Description and Sources	

Description
A systematic fieldwalking survey was undertaken by the Wiltshire Archaeology Field Group . A metal detecting survey was undertaken at the same time by Keith Rothery. A few sherds of Romano British pottery were found and a quantity of tile, though this tile is Post Medieval in date. The metal detecting survey did find a number of Roman coins and brooch fragments. This survey did not provide conclusive evidence that there is a Romano-British site in Church Hill Field and it is recommended that a geophysical survey is undertaken in this field and surrounding fields.
Sources
Report: WAFG. 2014.02 CHURCH HILL, NEWTON TONY
Associated Monument: MWI64310

Investigation undertaken by: Wiltshire Archaeology and Natural History Society (WANHS)
Archaeology Field Group (WAFG)

Site Owner: RSPB

Authorship: Dan Miles

Acknowledgements

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Disclaimer

This report has been compiled with all reasonable skill, care and attention to detail within the terms of the project design and within the general operating procedures of the Wiltshire Archaeology Field Group and WANHS. No responsibility is accepted whatsoever to third parties to whom this report or any part thereof is made known. Any such party relies upon this report at their own risk.

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1. Introduction

The site is in a field, known as Church Hill Field, on the western edge of Newton Tony parish, 5 km east of Amesbury in South Wiltshire. It is within the Winterbourne Downs RSPB reserve which was established to create an important chalk grassland link between the extensive grasslands of Salisbury Plain and Porton Down.

In September 2010 the field was to be permanently taken out of arable and converted to traditional chalk grassland. This provided a final opportunity to undertake fieldwalking and permission was given by the RSPB warden Patrick Cashman for a fieldwalking and metal detecting survey.

2. Location

The field, located at NGR SU20953983, is approximately 18ha in area and measures 300m, east to west and 600m, north to south.



Fig. 1 Location of Newton Tony

Imagery ©2013 TerraMetrics, Map data ©2013 GeoBasis-DE/BKG (©2009), Google

3. Archaeological and Historical Setting

For a long time Church Hill Field has been known locally to contain archaeological remains. Local farmers have reported large blocks of flint brought to the surface by ploughing and a

local metal detectorist has recovered a large number of Roman finds from the field, including coins and brooches.

A visit by the Wiltshire HER officer, Sarah Maclean, in Summer 2010, also recorded various surface finds, including flue tile, Romano-British pottery and potential building debris from the south west corner of the field. A slightly raised area with an accumulation of stones may form part of the foundations of a structure. This was interpreted as a potential occupation site (HER record MWI64310).

Communication with the Bourne Valley History Society has also revealed that archaeological work was undertaken in a field just to the south west in the 1950s. A letter (Appendix 1) shows that a Mr Booth undertook archaeological work as a result of a pipe trench being laid in the field. Finds included a few potsherds, a fragment of a stone mortar of Purbeck shelly limestone and pieces of a New Forest Ware flagon neck and bowl. The site was interpreted as a Early Iron Age or Romano British farmstead, AD 10-25? to AD 300. Although the exact location of the site is unknown, the history society believe that it is in the field the other side of the belt of tree from the target site at Church Hill, just within the parish of Allington.

Romano-British pottery has also been recorded at the edges of the fields on the other side of



the tree line close to the field.

Fig. 2 Location of survey site and find spots

There are a number of archaeological sites recorded on the Wiltshire Historic Environment Record (HER) and the National Record of the Historic Environment (NRHE) in the local area, which range from Bronze Age barrows to post medieval field boundaries and find spots. In terms of Romano-British sites and finds, an Iron Age or Romano British carved gypsum head was found at SU 2185 4010 (NMR no. 867469), a large scatter of Roman British pottery

found south near the village of Allington at SU 204 391 (NMR No. 223282, HER No. MWI17283).

A number of other Romano-British settlement sites have been found further away at Allington and Boscome Down, and the Roman town of Sorviodunum, at Old Sarum is less than 10 miles away. The Portway Roman Road is about 1 mile to the south-east of Church Hill Field.

3.1 Aerial photograph and LIDAR analysis

Oblique and vertical aerial photographs covering Church Hill Field were analysed at the EH Archive. Features in the field under investigation and the field across the tree line to the west (SU20753985) were plotted from aerial photographs by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England in 1995 (HER No. MWI17415 and MWI18055). However, these are undated and no further information is available. Re-examination of these did not provide any other further information.

LIDAR from the Geomatics website (<https://www.geomatics-group.co.uk/GeoCMS/Order.aspx>) was downloaded and analysed. 1 metre resolution LIDAR was available for Church Hill Field, however no features were identified at this resolution.

4. Geology

The underlying geology of the village, including the RSPB site, is Chalk of the Upper Cretaceous White Chalk Sub-Group (BGS, 1974). The gently sloping site is situated at an altitude of approximately 109m OD. The River Bourne, flowing east to west towards its confluence with the Hampshire Avon, lies only 250m to the SE of the southern edge of the field.

5. Aims and Objectives

The aim of the fieldwalking and metal detecting surveys was to collect any Romano-British surface finds to provide evidence of the potential Romano-British site in Church Hill field.

In addition, an objective was to identify any “hot spots” of concentrations of Romano-British finds to be able to target future geophysical survey in the field.

6. Methodology

6.1 Fieldwalking

Fieldwalking was undertaken using a linear grid method. An east–west baseline was established along the southern edge of the field and a 25m by 50m grid was then set out. Each line was walked for 5 minutes by a mixture of members of the field group and local villagers. To ensure that the mixed level of experience of the field walkers did not distort the

results, walkers were randomly assigned grids, rather than walking their own continuous line. 147 grid squares (A1 - J20) were walked by 20 fieldwalkers and the survey was completed in a day.

The fieldwalking conditions were very poor – the field had been tilled, rather than ploughed, and a large amount of vegetal matter had been mixed into the soil. In addition, as it had not rained for a while, the ground had a grey-white dusty complexion. These poor conditions made the identification of any finds in the field very difficult, even for the professional archaeologists involved in the survey.



Fig 3. Fieldwalking grid

6.2 Metal detecting survey

A metal detecting survey was undertaken in conjunction with the fieldwalking. The survey focussed on the south-west corner of the field, due to time restraints, and as this area had been previously identified as a potential target site by the Wiltshire HER officer. Finds were collected and recorded according to the same grid marking scheme used by the fieldwalking survey.

7. Results

The fieldwalking and metal detecting surveys both recovered various finds.

7.1 Fieldwalking finds

- Pottery

A small number of Romano British pottery sherds were collected. These included grey ware, mortaria, terra sigillata and other coarse wares.

A number of fragments of Post-Medieval red and green glaze pottery was also found – these can be classified into 18th to early 19th century Wiltshire earthenware products.

- Brick and Tile

The Ceramic Building Material (CBM) was identified by Mike Stone, ex-curator of Chippenham Museum and a CBM specialist. A quantity of CBM was picked up during the survey. The majority is peg tile, which was commonly used on roofs, with a couple of fragments of pantile. All the roof furniture is remarkably uniform in fabric suggesting one nearby source. The probably date for the peg and pantile is 18th to 19th century. The fragments of brick are a mixture of handmade which could date back to the Georgian period.

- Other finds

A few metal objects, including nails, shell, non local stone and glass were found. The nails and glass are modern in date.

Appendix 2 is a spreadsheet of all the finds from the fieldwalking survey.

7.2 Metal detecting finds

A number of finds were discovered by Keith Rothery, who undertook the metal detecting survey. These were identified by Katie Hinds and Richard Henry (ex and current Wiltshire Finds Liaison Officer, Portable Antiquity Scheme). The coins were described by David Algar of Salisbury & South Wiltshire Museum.

For full details including photographs of the metal detecting finds see appendix 3.

- Roman Finds

Ten Roman coins were found; eight 4th century nummi and 2 radiates, all of which post date AD 260. A fragment of a Roman bow brooch (catchplate & lower bow), dating to AD 50 – 150 was also found.

- Later Finds

A number of post Roman finds were recovered, including: three silver coins (two Edward III dating to 1344-52 and a possible Edward/Henry dating to the 14th/15th century), a Medieval buckle and forked spacer and a 17th century trade token.

8. Discussion

The aim of the survey was to collect surface evidence to indicate the location of the potential Romano-British site in Church Hill field. In this respect, the surface finds from the fieldwalking appear very much inconclusive. The CBM collected is Post Medieval in date, and only a few sherds of Romano-British pottery were found. This lack of finds is in contrast to the site visit by the Wiltshire HER officer a few months previously who collected a fragment of Roman flue tile, Romano-British pottery and potential flint building material.

However, the metal detecting survey did recover 10 Roman coins and a fragment of bow brooch. The coins date to post 260 AD and although there is not a large enough sample for an informative Reece period analysis, for any real patterns to emerge, the coins found, are consistent with a site that prospers into the 4th Century.

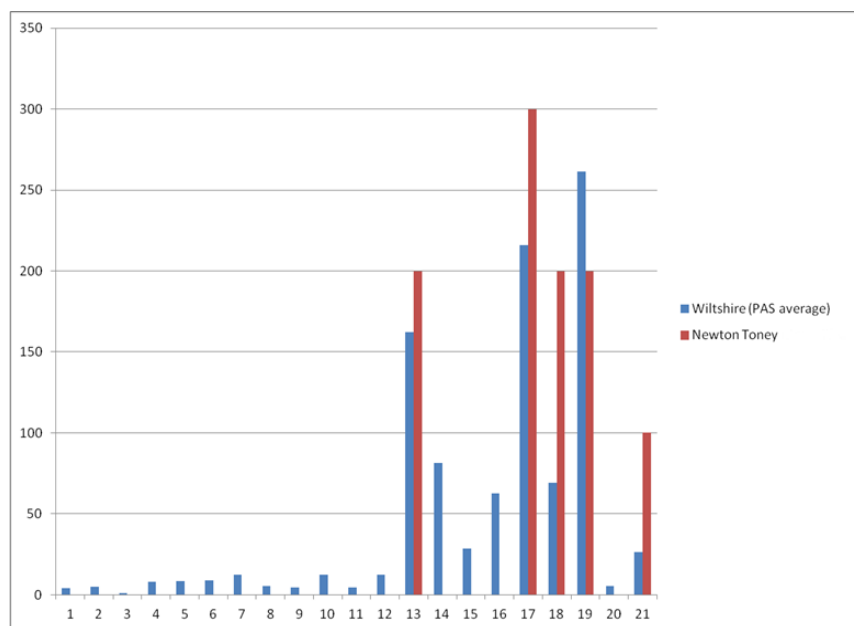


Fig 4. Reece period analysis

These metal detecting finds are consistent with the number of Roman coins and brooches found in the same field by a local metal detector – although the exact location of these finds within the field was not recorded. The nature and quantity of the finds do suggest that there may be some sort of Romano-British site in the local vicinity.

As there were not any significant Roman finds from the fieldwalking, the analysis of their distribution was not undertaken. Although there were significant Roman metal detecting finds, their distribution was influenced by the focus of the survey on the south-west area of the field. This means that the objective to locate “hot spots” to direct further geophysical survey was not achieved. However, it is still believed that the most probable location for a potential site would be in the south-west corner of the field.

9. Conclusion

The surveys have found material cultural evidence of Roman presence in Church Hill Field. However, the finds do not provide any conclusive evidence that there is a Romano-British site in the field. All the evidence from the survey together with previous finds (farmers and local metaldetectorist), the results of the 1950s watching brief (though exact location unknown) and surface finds of Romano-British coarse wares found in the field edges on the other side of the tree line from Church Hill Field, do suggest that there is a Romano-British site within or in the vicinity of Church Hill Field. However further investigation is required.

10. Recommendations for further investigation

The recommendations from this fieldwalking and metal detecting survey is that further investigation is required in and within the vicinity of Church Hill Field. The following research is recommended:

- Undertake a magnetometer geophysical survey in the South-West corner of Church Hill Field and neighbouring fields (Target areas 1, 2, 3, 4 in Fig. 5).
- Undertake fieldwalking and metal detecting surveys in the neighbouring fields, as above.



Fig. 5 Recommended targets for future geophysical and fieldwalking/metal detecting surveys

11. Project Archive and Copyright.

The project archive and digital and paper copies of this report will be deposited at the Wiltshire Museum, Long Street, Devizes. Copyright remains with the authors. The project report is also available on the Wiltshire Historic Environment Record and through OASIS on the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) Grey Literature Library.