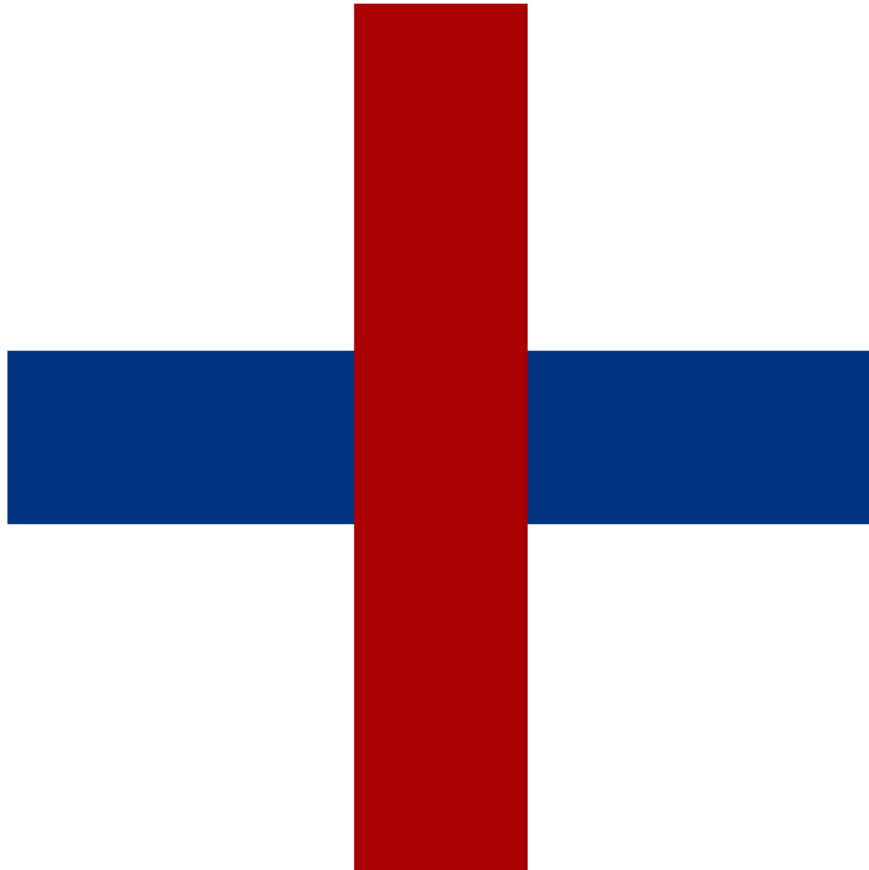


# **The Medieval Trinitarian Priory of the Holy Trinity**

**Easton Royal, Wiltshire**

**Survey and Research Report 2013-2015**



**Collated by Robin Holley**

**with contributions by**

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John Harper, John Oswin, Joanna Ramsay and others**



# Contents

	Pages
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>List of Figures and Plates</b>	<b>7-11</b>
<b>List of Abbreviations</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Documents used to compile this report</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Chapter 1. Introduction</b>	<b>13</b>
1.1 Research aims and objectives	13
1.2 Location, description and geology of the study area.	13-18
<b>Chapter 2. Botanical Assessment</b>	<b>19</b>
2.1 Botanical Assessment Report of Lowland Meadows	19-22
2.2 Fauna	23
2.3 Conclusions	23
<b>Chapter 3. Historical Background</b>	<b>24</b>
3.1 Brief Historical Background of Easton Royal	24-28
3.2 Historical Background of the Priory	29
3.2.1 Introduction	29-32
3.2.2 The Concept of Monastic Hospitality	32-33
3.2.3 Who were the Travellers?	33-34
3.2.4 Links between Trinitarian Institutions	34
3.2.5 The Family of Stephen, the Founder of Easton Priory	34-37
3.2.6 Easton before the Priory	38-42
3.2.7 The Multiplicity of Religious Institutions at Easton	442
3.2.8 Construction and Foundation	42-45
3.2.9 Purgatory, Charities and Prayers for the Dead	46-48
3.2.10 Patronage and Purgatory the Keys to Understanding Easton Priory	48-49
3.2.11 Properties and Lands of Easton Priory	49
3.2.12 The Statute of Mortmain	49

		<b>Pages</b>
3.2.13	Frankalmoin	<b>49-59</b>
3.2.14	The Turbulent Years (1360s)	<b>59</b>
3.2.15	The Complex Decrees of 1363	<b>59-60</b>
3.2.16	The Removal and Reinstatement of Brother Edmund as Warden	<b>60-61</b>
3.2.17	Excommunication of Brother Robert of Donnington	<b>62</b>
3.2.18	Accusations of Beggars Pretending to be Monks	<b>62</b>
3.2.19	Reflections	<b>62-63</b>
3.2.20	The Collapse of Easton following the Black Death	<b>63-66</b>
3.2.21	The Destructive Fire of 1493	<b>67</b>
3.2.22	The Archbishop of Canterbury's Letter	<b>67</b>
3.2.23	The King's Letter	<b>67-68</b>
3.2.24	Implications	<b>68</b>
3.2.25	Evidence of Rebuilding	<b>68-70</b>
3.2.26	The Site of the Priory after Dissolution	<b>71-79</b>
3.2.27	Acknowledgements	<b>79</b>
3.2.28	References	<b>79-83</b>
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>Geophysical Survey</b>	<b>84</b>
4.1	Abstract	<b>84</b>
4.2	Acknowledgements	<b>84</b>
4.3	Introduction	<b>84</b>
4.3.1	Location	<b>84-85</b>
4.3.2	Dates of Survey	<b>86</b>
4.3.3	Resources	<b>86</b>
4.3.4	Background	<b>86-87</b>
4.3.5	Scope	<b>87</b>
4.4	Method	<b>87</b>
4.4.1	Gridding	<b>87-88</b>
4.4.2	Magnetometer	<b>88</b>
4.4.3	Twin Probe Resistance	<b>88-89</b>
4.4.4	Software	<b>8</b>
4.4.5	Limitations	<b>89-90</b>
4.5	Results	<b>90</b>
4.5.1	Magnetometer	<b>90</b>
4.5.2	Twin Probe Resistance	<b>90-92</b>

		<b>Pages</b>
4.6	Discussion	<b>92</b>
4.6.1	Comment	<b>92-93</b>
4.6.2	Recommendations	<b>93-94</b>
4.7	Bibliography	<b>94</b>
4.8	Appendix A: Details of Gridding	<b>95</b>
<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>Earthwork Survey</b>	<b>96-97</b>
<b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>Fish Ponds and Watercourses</b>	<b>98</b>
6.1	Site A	<b>98-100</b>
6.2	Site B	<b>100</b>
6.3	Site C	<b>100-101</b>
6.4	Site D	<b>101</b>
6.5	Site E	<b>102</b>
6.6	Site F	<b>102-103</b>
6.7	Site G	<b>103-104</b>
<b>Chapter 7.</b>	<b>Finds from Easton Royal</b>	<b>105</b>
7.1	Artefacts Retrieved from Molehills in Priory Field	<b>105-109</b>
7.2	Random Finds Report	<b>109-110</b>
7.3	Test Pits Report	<b>110-114</b>
<b>Chapter 8.</b>	<b>Roman Road Survey</b>	<b>115</b>
8.1	Summary	<b>115</b>
8.2	Acknowledgements	<b>115</b>
8.3	Site Location and Description	<b>115-118</b>
8.4	Research Aims and Objectives	<b>118</b>
8.5	Geophysical Survey of Priory Field	<b>118-119</b>
8.6	Geophysical Survey of Home Farm field	<b>120</b>
8.7	Excavation methods and Techniques	<b>120-121</b>
8.8	Summary of Results of Excavation	<b>122-128</b>
8.9	The Projected Line of the Roman Road	<b>129-131</b>
8.10	Discussion	<b>132-133</b>
8.11	Finds Assessment	<b>134</b>

		<b>Pages</b>
8.11.1	Dressed Stone	<b>135</b>
8.11.2	Flint	<b>135</b>
8.11.3	Ceramic Building Material	<b>135</b>
8.11.4	Pottery	<b>135</b>
8.11.5	Metal	<b>136</b>
8.11.6	Coin	<b>136</b>
8.11.7	Animal Bone	<b>136</b>
8.11.8	Clay Tobacco Pipe	<b>136</b>
8.11.9	Glass	<b>136</b>
8.11.10	Miscellaneous Finds	<b>136</b>
8.11.11	Stray Finds	<b>137</b>
8.11.12	Discussion of Finds	<b>137</b>
8.12	Archives	<b>137</b>
8.13	Bibliography	<b>137</b>
8.14	Appendix: Context Sheets and Levels Register	<b>138-149</b>
<b>Chapter 9</b>	<b>Archaeological Evaluation and Assessment of Results</b>	<b>150</b>
9.1	James Bond	<b>150</b>
9.1.1	Historical Evidence	<b>150-156</b>
9.1.2	Archaeological Evidence at Easton Royal	<b>156-160</b>
9.2	Mark Corney	<b>161</b>
9.2.1	Introduction	<b>161</b>
9.2.2	Earthworks and Geophysics	<b>161-162</b>
9.2.3	Comment	<b>163</b>
9.3	Archaeological+ Historical Landscape Research Group	<b>163</b>
9.3.1	Discussion and Recommendations for Further Work	<b>163-164</b>
9.3.2	Project Archive and its Location	<b>164</b>

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## List of Figures

Number	Description	Page
Fig. 1	National and County Map	14
Fig. 2	Local Map of the Area.	15
Fig. 3	OS 6 inch, c1900 map	15
Fig. 4	WSA 3354 Map of Easton 1880	16
Fig. 5	WSA 3354 Map of Easton 1846	16
Fig. 6	Gridded Map of the Priory Site	17
Fig. 7	19711026 Aerial high level photograph of Easton Royal	11
Fig. 8	19461104 Photograph of the Priory site showing the Earthworks	18
Fig. 9	19830415 Photograph of the Priory site showing the Earthworks	18
Fig. 10	Botanical Assessment of Lowland Meadow at Easton Royal, Map of the Study Area.	19
Fig. 11	Botanical Assessment of Lowland Meadow at Easton Royal, Photograph of Area A looking west towards church.	20
Fig. 12	Botanical Assessment of Lowland Meadow at Easton Royal, Photograph of Area B looking eastwards.	20
Fig. 13	Botanical Assessment of Lowland Meadow at Easton Royal, Photograph of Area C, looking towards new graveyard.	21
Fig. 14	Botanical Assessment of Lowland Meadow at Easton Royal, Photograph of Area C looking south-east.	22
Fig. 15	Botanical Assessment of Lowland Meadow at Easton Royal, Photograph of Pond at eastern end of study area, looking west towards church.	22
Fig. 16	Bronze Age Sites and Find Spots	24-25
Fig. 17	Iron Age Sites and Find Spots	26-26
Fig. 18	Romano-British Sites and Find Spots	26
Fig. 19	Early Medieval Sites and Find Spots	27
Fig. 20	Later Medieval Sites and Find Spots	27
Fig. 21	Undated Sites and Find Spots	27-28
Fig. 22	Map showing Finds Spots from HER.	28
Fig. 23	Map of Great Britain and Ireland showing the locations of Trinitarian Priors.	30
Fig. 24	Photograph of Holy Trinity Church, Ingham.	31
Fig. 25	Photograph of the remains of the cloisters of the Trinitarian Priory at Ingham	31
Fig. 26	The peculiar 'tower beside the tower' and a blocked priory doorway at Ingham	32
Fig. 27	The relationships between Stephen as founder, and the patrons and benefactors, and the descent of the Easton Manors,	36
Fig. 28	Descent of Easton Manors 1086 – 1550	37
Fig. 29	This document of about 1190 AD, through which William Marshall, Earl of Pembroke, confirmed the transfer of land in Easton from Bradenstoke Priory to Adam of Easton WSA 9-15-1.	38
Fig. 30	The transfer of land Hereford Cathedral to Adam of Easton, 1197 or 1198. It bears the seals of both the Bishop and the Chapter of Hereford. WSA 9-15-2.	39
Fig. 31	The admission of Stephen the Clerk to the church of Easton in c1210. (WSA 9-15-5).	40
Fig. 32	The seal of William Marshall, Earl of Pembroke, on a document claiming that his father had granted Easton church to the Priory of Bradenstoke, hence challenging the appointment of Stephen (son of Adam of Easton) as vicar. (WSA 9-15-6)	41
Fig. 33	The Bishop of Salisbury's resolution of a dispute, confirming that Stephen of Tisbury (son of Adam of Easton) lawfully held the church of Easton. (WSA 9-15-7).	41

<b>Number</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Page</b>
Fig. 34	The document through which Stephen, Archdeacon of Wiltshire, formally conveyed his hospital, land and church to the Brothers of the Order of the Holy Trinity and Captives. (WSA 9-15-10).	<b>44</b>
Fig. 35	The foundation document of Easton Hospital and Priory of 9 May 1246 was re-issued in 1374, when the original parchments were ‘decaying with age’ (WSA 9-15-45).	<b>45</b>
Fig. 36	The document through which Henry Esturmy ensured that prayers were said for 13 members of his family, around their tombs in the Easton Priory church, which must have occupied a significant area (WSA 1300-30).	<b>48</b>
Fig. 37	The Savernake estate map of 1786 (WSA 1300-360) redrawn.	<b>50</b>
Fig. 38	Extract from Rent Roll of 1540 describing The Great Wood, or common wood in Savernake.	<b>51</b>
Fig. 39	Strutt’s 1822 engraving of the King Oak in Savernake.	<b>51</b>
Fig. 40	The seal of Stephen Druce on a document in which, ‘for the salvation of his soul’, he renounced his entitlement concerning land which his great uncle Stephen had transferred to the Trinitarians of Easton (WSA 9-15-20).	<b>52</b>
Fig. 41	Edward II’s approval for the Priory to acquire a house and 60 acres of land in Easton. (WSA 9-15-14)	<b>53</b>
Fig. 42	The agreement through which Robert of Burbage agreed to provide further land in Easton and Milton Lilbourne and funds to the Priory. (WSA 9-15-31).	<b>54</b>
Fig. 43	Edward II’s approval for the transfer of 120 acres in Easton and Milton Lilbourne to Easton Priory. (WSA 300-23)	<b>55</b>
Fig. 44	Photograph of Puthall Farm, east of Marlborough.	<b>56</b>
Fig. 45	The Great Seal of Edward III.	<b>56</b>
Fig. 46	Photograph of Froxfield Church.	<b>57</b>
Fig. 47	Photograph of Tidcombe Church.	<b>58</b>
Fig. 48	The remains of the Priory seal on a lease is of interest. It shows a seated ecclesiastical figure with arms raised, above three half lions, the crest of the Esturmy patrons.	<b>59</b>
Fig. 49	The re-instatement of Brother Edmund as Prior, (WSA 9-15-39).	<b>61</b>
Fig. 50	The Archdeacon of Wiltshire’s licence for Easton parish church to be demolished.	<b>64</b>
Fig. 51	Ratification of the Bishop of Salisbury, the Dean and Chapter, Priory of the Holy Trinity, and Henry Esturmy the patron, for Easton parish church to be demolished.	<b>65</b>
Fig. 52	The two surviving seals (of four) on the ratification for Easton parishioners to demolish their church and worship at the Priory.	<b>66</b>
Fig. 53	King Henry VII’s letter of about 1499, written in English, seeking the cathedral’s support in appointing the king’s choice of a minister at the rebuilt Easton Priory (WSA 9-15-55).	<b>69</b>
Fig. 54	Monogram of King Henry VII on the letter concerning appointment of the new minister at Easton (WSA 9-15-55).	<b>70</b>
Fig. 55	Lease of land in Burbage, written in the rebuilt Chapter House in 1513, is the last document from Easton Priory surviving (WSA 9-6-49).	<b>70</b>
Fig. 56	Surrender, referring to the lease of the former Priory and its lands. 1545 (WSA 9-15-63).	<b>73</b>
Fig. 57	Survey in English of Easton in c1580. (WSA 1300-90).	<b>74</b>
Fig. 58	The tomb in Great Bedwyn to Sir John Seymour.	<b>77</b>
Fig. 59	Inscription at Bedwyn stating that Sir John Seymour’s body was removed from Easton church.	<b>77</b>
Fig. 60	Picture of Easton parish church by John Buckler (1770-1851).	<b>78</b>



<b>Number</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Page</b>
Fig. 61	Photograph of Holy Trinity, Easton Royal parish church today.	79
Fig. 62	Easton Royal, Wiltshire, location.	85
Fig. 63	Survey site within Easton Royal.	85
Fig. 64	Easton Royal earthworks. Lidar.	86
Fig. 65	Easton Royal Earthworks. Aerial photograph, 1983.	87
Fig. 66	Magnetometer: Bartington fluxgate gradiometer.	88
Fig. 67	Twin probe resistance: Geoscan RM15D	88
Fig. 68	Twin probe resistance: TR/CIA	89
Fig. 69	Magnetometer plot.	90
Fig. 70	Twin probe resistance plot.	91
Fig. 71	Twin probe resistance plot annotated	91
Fig. 72	Comparison of twin probe resistance survey with lidar.	92
Fig. 73	Lidar survey showing earthworks at Easton Royal.	93
Fig. 74	Numerical sequence of magnetometer grids	95
Fig. 75	Numerical sequence of resistance grids as in final plot.	95
Fig. 76	LiDAR Image of Easton Royal showing Earthworks in the Priory Field.	96
Fig. 77	Aerial Photograph showing Earthworks in the Priory Field	97
Fig. 78	Profile showing the undulation of the earthwork in the Priory Field.	97
Fig. 79	LiDAR image with the location of Fishponds and Water Courses	98
Fig. 80	Geophysics results showing parts of the north and west bank of Fishpond 'A'.	99
Fig. 81	Medieval fishpond at Knaptoft, Shearsby, Leicestershire	99
Fig. 82	Aerial photograph of the Medieval fishpond at Edington Priory, Wiltshire	100
Fig. 83	Photograph of small pond 'B'	100
Fig. 84	Photograph of the small, dried out pond (site C)	101
Fig. 85	Andrews' and Dury's map of Easton, 1773	101
Fig. 86	LiDAR Image Showing both diversional channel 'E' and the old stream coarse	102
Fig. 87	Photograph of possible site of early medieval mill!	102
Fig. 88	Photograph of Seymour's Pond at Burbage.	103
Fig. 89	OS map 1900, showing known wells in Easton Royal	104
Fig. 90	Flints Table Report retrieved from Molehills.	105
Fig. 91	Bronze Age Pottery Table Report retrieved from Molehills.	105
Fig. 92	Iron Age Pottery Table Report retrieved from Molehills.	106
Fig. 93	Prehistoric Finds Spots Map	106
Fig. 94	Romano-British Pottery Table Report retrieved from Molehills.	106
Fig. 95	Romano-British Finds Spots Map	106
Fig. 96	Medieval Pottery Table retrieved from Molehills.	107
Fig. 97	Medieval Pottery Find Spots Map	107
Fig. 98	Post-Medieval Pottery Table retrieved from Molehills.	107
Fig. 99	Burnt Material Table Report retrieved from Molehills.	108
Fig. 100	Burnt Material Find Spots Map	108
Fig. 101	Glass Fragments Table Report retrieved from Molehills.	108
Fig. 102	Metal Object Table Report retrieved from Molehills.	109
Fig. 103	Prehistoric before 43AD, Random finds	109
Fig. 104	Bronze Age 2500-800BC, Random finds	109
Fig. 105	Iron Age 800BC-43AD, Random finds	110
Fig. 106	Romano-British 43-410AD, Random finds	110
Fig. 107	Early Medieval (Anglo-Saxon) 410-1066AD, Random finds	110
Fig. 108	Later Medieval and Tudor (1066-c1600AD), Random finds	110
Fig. 109	Post Medieval (including Industrial, Victorian and modern) c1600-present, Random finds	110

<b>Number</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Page</b>
Fig. 110	Prehistoric before 43AD, Test Pit Finds Report.	111
Fig. 111	Prehistoric Finds Spots Map	111
Fig. 112	Romano-British AD43-410, Test Pit Finds Report.	111
Fig. 113	Romano-British Finds Spot Map	112
Fig. 114	Later Medieval and Tudor 1066-c1600, Test Pit Finds Report	112
Fig. 115	Medieval Finds Spots Map	113
Fig. 116	The Crotal bell,	113
Fig. 117	Post-Medieval c1600-present (includes Industrial, Victorian and modern, Test Pit Finds Report.	114
Fig. 118	National and Wiltshire Maps	116
Fig. 119	Local OS Map of Wiltshire	116
Fig. 120	Map of Collin's farm sale particulars. (WSA1225/136/1 July 1935)	117
Fig. 121	Survey map of Easton, (WSA 3354, 1846)	118
Fig. 122	Magnetometer survey from the Priory Field site.	119
Fig. 123	Geophysical Survey, Phase 1 Priory Field	119
Fig. 124	Geophysical Survey, Phase 2, Home Farm site.	120
Fig. 125	OS Map showing position of the trench	121
Fig. 126	OS Map showing position of the trench and geophysical survey (Phase 2)	121
Fig. 127	Section drawing through the Roman road	123
Fig. 128	Aerial photograph of the trench under excavation	124
Fig. 129	Aerial photograph of the trench under excavation, facing south.	124
Fig. 130	Photograph of the trench under excavation	125
Fig. 131	Photograph of the trench, showing the western ditches.	126
Fig. 132	Photograph of the trench, showing the western ditches	126
Fig. 133	Photograph of the trench, showing the agger surface of the road.	127
Fig. 134	Photograph of the trench, showing the agger surface of the road.	127
Fig. 135	Photograph of the trench, showing the agger surface of the road.	128
Fig. 136	Photograph of the trench, showing the ditches on the eastern side of the trench	128
Fig. 137	OS map showing the line of the Roman road from Savernake to Hill Barn, Easton.	129
Fig. 138	Aerial Photograph of Easton Royal showing the predicted line of Roman road in red and the perimeter of the survey area in yellow	130
Fig. 139	LiDAR aerial image of Easton showing line of the Roman road.	130
Fig. 140	LiDAR aerial image of Easton showing line of the Roman road.	131
Fig. 141	Aerial Photograph of Easton Royal showing the line of Roman road.	131
Fig. 142	Aerial Photograph of the eastern side the village showing the line of Roman road and the enclosure both indicated	132
Fig. 143	Aerial Photograph of the enclosure.	133
Fig. 144	Aerial Photograph of the Roman road looking south	133
Fig. 145	Table of finds from each context	134
Fig. 146	Table of Romano-British pottery	135
Fig. 147	Table of Post-Medieval pottery	135
Fig. 148	Photograph of the Roman coin recovered from the agger surface of the road.	136
Fig. 149	Master Context Sheet, Roman Road	138
Fig. 150	Context Sheet (001), Roman Road	139
Fig. 151	Context Sheet (002), Roman Road	140
Fig. 152	Context Sheet (003), Roman Road	141
Fig. 153	Context Sheet (004), Roman Road	142
Fig. 154	Context Sheet (005), Roman Road	143

Number	Description	Page
Fig. 155	Context Sheet (006), Roman Road	144
Fig. 156	Context Sheet (007), Roman Road	145
Fig. 157	Context Sheet (008), Roman Road	146
Fig. 158	Context Sheet (009), Roman Road	147
Fig. 159	Context Sheet (010), Roman Road	148
Fig. 160	Level Register Sheet. Roman Road	149
Fig. 161	Easton Royal, hypothetical layout Map of Priory Site	160
Fig. 162	LiDAR survey, Comments by Mark Corney.	161
Fig. 163	LiDAR and geophysical survey results (Oswin 2014, Fig.?)	162
Fig. 164	Annotated results of the geophysical survey (Oswin 2014, Fig. ?)	162

## List of Abbreviations

AHLRG	Archaeological + Historical Landscape Research Group
BACAS	Bath and Camerton Archaeological Society
ERHG	Easton Royal Heritage Group
HLF	Heritage Lottery Fund
HER	Historic Environment Record (Wiltshire)
LiDAR	Light Detection And Ranging
NMR	National Monuments Record (English Heritage)
OS	Ordnance Survey
WSA	Wiltshire & Swindon Archives

## Documents used to compile this report

Amadio, L. *Historical Background of Easton Royal, Wiltshire*

Amadio, L. *Artefacts Retrieved from Molehills in Priory Field*

Amadio, L. with contributions from Clive Green. *Random Finds Report, Easton Royal*

Amadio, L. *Easton Royal Test Pit Report.*

Bathe, G. *A History of the Trinitarian Priory at Easton Royal based on Primary Sources*

Bathe, G. & Ramsey, J. *Botanical Assessment Report of Lowland Meadows at Easton Royal*

Bond, J. *Archaeological Assessment and Evaluation of Results at Easton Royal*

Corney, M. *Comments of Survey Data from Easton Royal,*

Holley, R., Clarke, B. & Amadio, L. *Roman Road Survey and Excavation Report.*

Holley, R., Clarke, B. *Fish ponds and water courses*

Oswin, J. *Geophysical Survey at Easton Royal, Wiltshire March 2014.* Bath & Camerton Archaeological Society

## Summary

This project involved the Archaeological Historical Landscape Research Group, the community of Easton Royal, Schools and the Easton Royal Heritage Group in a quest to find and map the location, and to research the lost Trinitarian Priory. This was possibly the only surviving priory from this order, which makes this project of national importance.

The aim is to identify its location using archives in the British Museum, the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, and the Longleat Estate Archives, and to carry out full topographical and geophysical surveys to locate any surviving features associated with the priory and its buildings. The results were used to create a 3d animation of the priory.

Test pits were excavated in many of the gardens in the village, to try to locate features or finds possibly associated with the priory, and to map and understand the development of the village from the prehistoric period.

Reports of the investigation and expert analysis, with interpretation of the findings have been collated for publication in this report and as a free CD Rom to be available to the community and beyond. Members of the Archaeological and Historical Landscape Research Group (AHLRG), the Easton Royal Heritage Group (ERHG), and the local community are involved in ongoing work to trace the foundations and/or other remains of the lost Trinitarian Priory. The project included investigation of the priory itself, and the history and development of the village of Easton Royal and its immediate environs.

Through preliminary discussions with members of the community, observations on the ground, and the study of maps and aerial LiDAR images it has become apparent the Roman road running south from Cunetio (modern Mildenhall) may have passed through Eastern Royal on its route to Old Sarum. A limited excavation was undertaken to investigate this possibility.

This report is divided into sections covering the different aspects of the project. These reports are listed above, and are also available as separate documents.

## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Research aims and objectives**

The Project aims were as follows:

#### Priory Site

To locate any archaeological structure or remains that might suggest that this area was the location of the lost Trinitarian Priory

To complete a botanical assessment of the site.

To carry out in-depth historical desk based research into the priory and associated buildings .

To survey the site using sophisticated electronic geophysical equipment and produce a topographical survey map of the field where tradition indicates the priory was located.

To obtain a coherent plan of the site in terms of complete structures, particularly buildings, and to attempt a reconstruction of the history and use of the site.

To address relevant research issues relating to medieval priory buildings on the site, to place them into context locally and nationally, and to publish the results of the investigation.

Features in the field clearly run into other features or in some cases cut across them. It therefore desirable to determine the relationships between them in order to establish a chronology of occupation.

#### Test Pits

In order to attempt to further understand the origin of the priory and the development of the village a programme of garden test pits were excavated. Specifically the aims of the work were to record any buried structures and to record and map all finds recovered from these test pits. This will help us understand the development of the village and perhaps help in the location of the lost Trinitarian Priory.

#### Roman road

There was a priory providing hospitality for travellers, which was presumably situated close to the main Salisbury – Marlborough road through Easton. There is also the possibility that it lay close to the Roman road which is thought to have passed through the eastern edge of the village. The project aimed to locate and, if possible, map that part of the Roman road from Mildenhall (Cunetio) to Old Sarum in the vicinity of the village of Easton Royal.

### **1.2 Location, description and geology of the study area.**

Easton Royal is located 7 km south-south-east of Marlborough and 2.50 km west of Burbage in east Wiltshire. This long and narrow parish is oriented north-south with an area of around 897ha. The village is in the Vale of Pewsey, which runs eastwards from Devizes to end near Botley Down, Shalbourne. The vale is a low-lying valley which separates the higher lands of Salisbury Plain to the south and Marlborough Downs to the north.

The parish of Easton Royal is divided into two completely different areas of geology, the northern half

lies predominantly on upper greensand overlain in places by alluvial deposits, the southern area is lower chalk, which forms the rolling foothills of the main escarpment onto Salisbury Plain. Two small streams cross the parish from east to west and then drain into the Christchurch Avon. The lands around the village are used growing crops and as pasture for cattle and sheep.

The height of the land in the parish varies from 173 metres in the northern part and gradually descends to around 130 metres in the southern portion, before rising steeply to the summit of Easton Hill at 240 metres. The site lies at a height of c152.4m above Ordnance Datum, to the south of Easton farm, centred on SU20987-60387.

The area under investigation is a field measuring 475 metres in length by 200 metres in width, but it is not a complete rectangle as parts have been utilized in the past centuries for housing and for a burial ground with its access path, the field is now predominantly grassland used for grazing.

The location of the priory/mansion was determined partly through documentary research, surviving earthworks, and from village traditions, also the layout of the village as it is today might provide clues. The priory provided hospitality for travellers, and therefore was presumably situated close to the main Salisbury-Marlborough Road through Easton, or possibly close to the Roman Road, which is thought to pass along the eastern edge of the village. In 1368 the priory was described as being within 60 paces of the parish church.

The priory, hospital and church were all consumed in the same fire in 1493 which suggests these building were grouped tightly together. The priory, after it became a mansion house, was sited in garden/orchard grounds of 2 acres. The mansion house, when demolished, generated a huge pile of rubble which was removed 1766-7 and the ground levelled. The site of the mansion is described as being in a field of 10 acres called Goodman's Mead, next to the street.

**Figure 1. National and County Map**

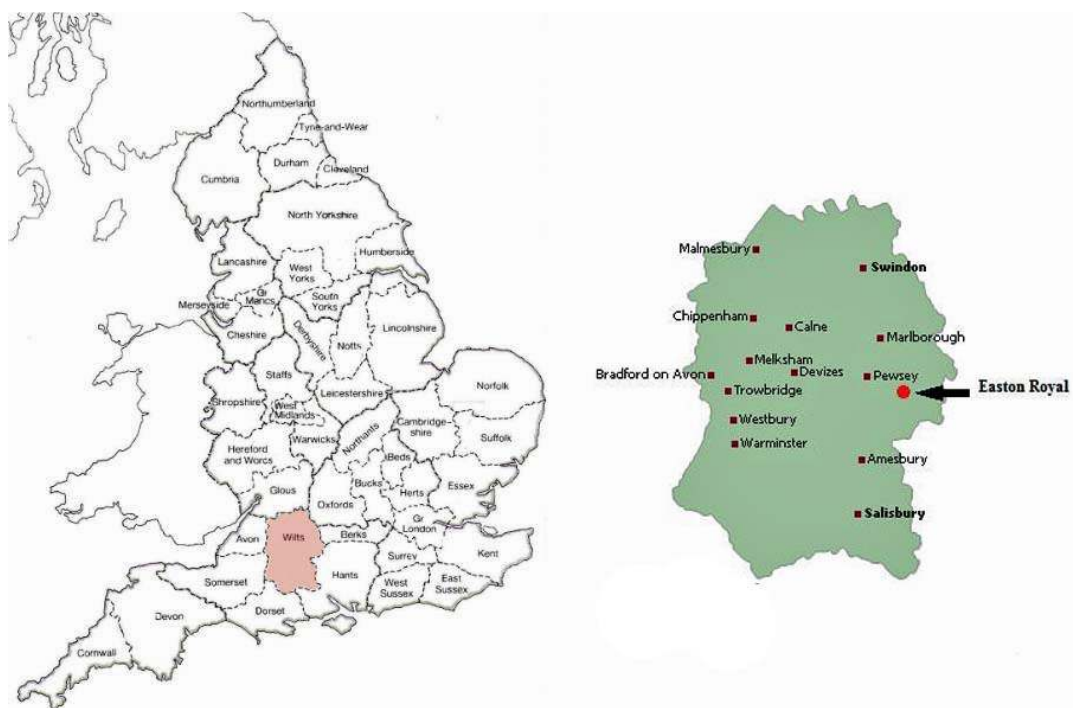




Figure 2. Local OS Map of the Area.

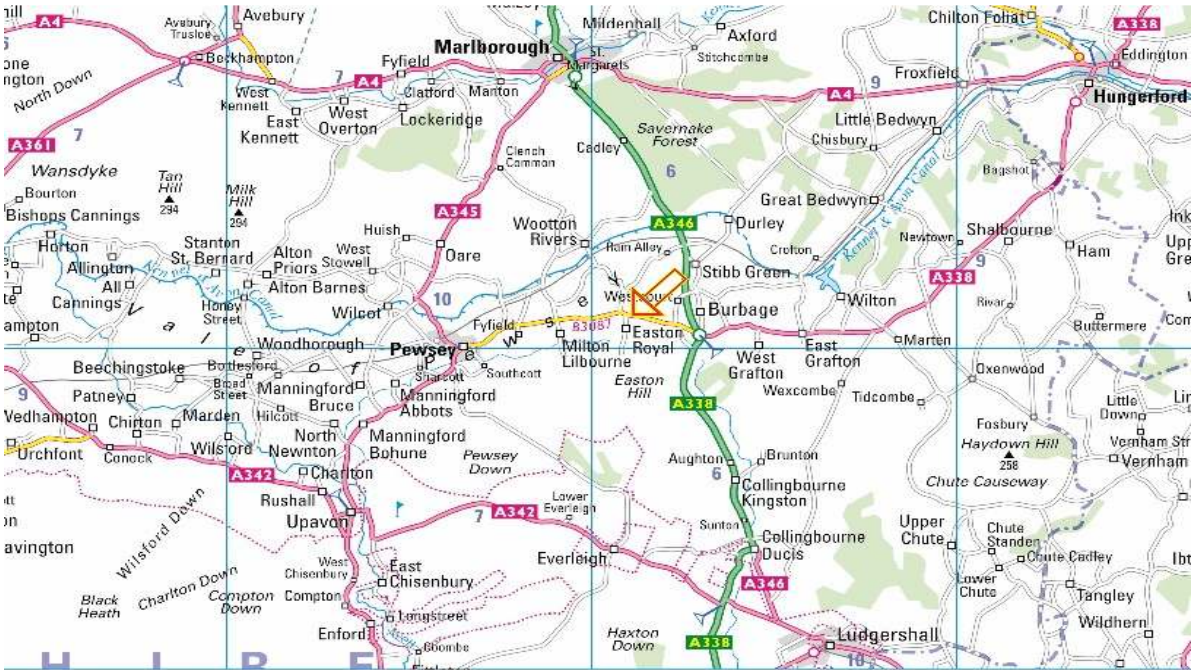


Figure 3. OS 6 inch, c1900 map

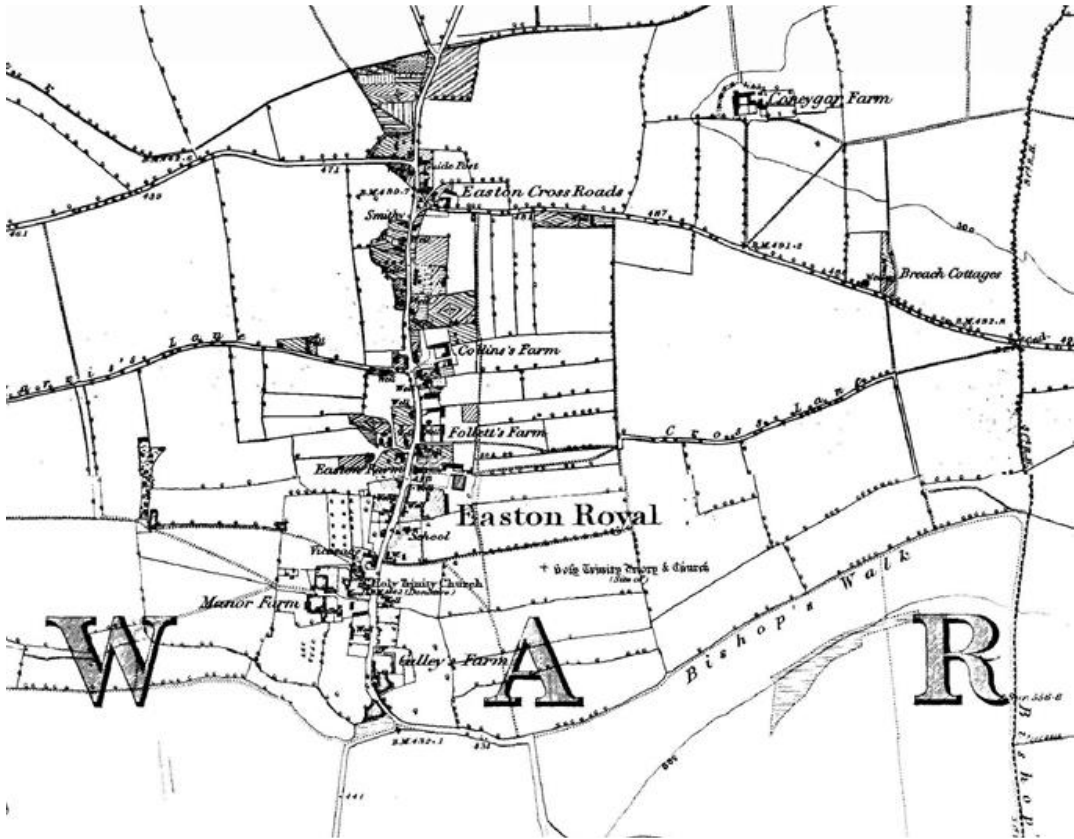


Figure 4. WSA 3354 Map of Easton 1880

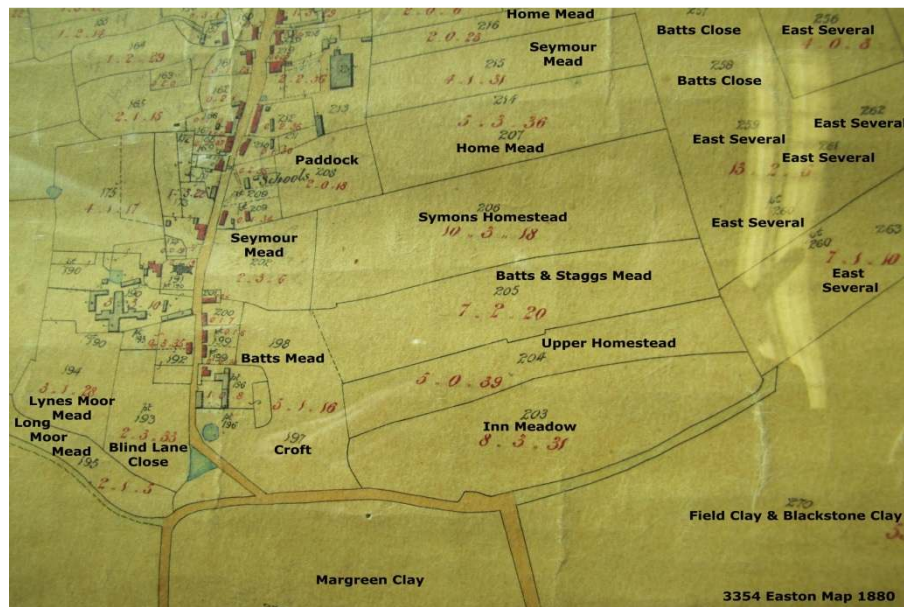
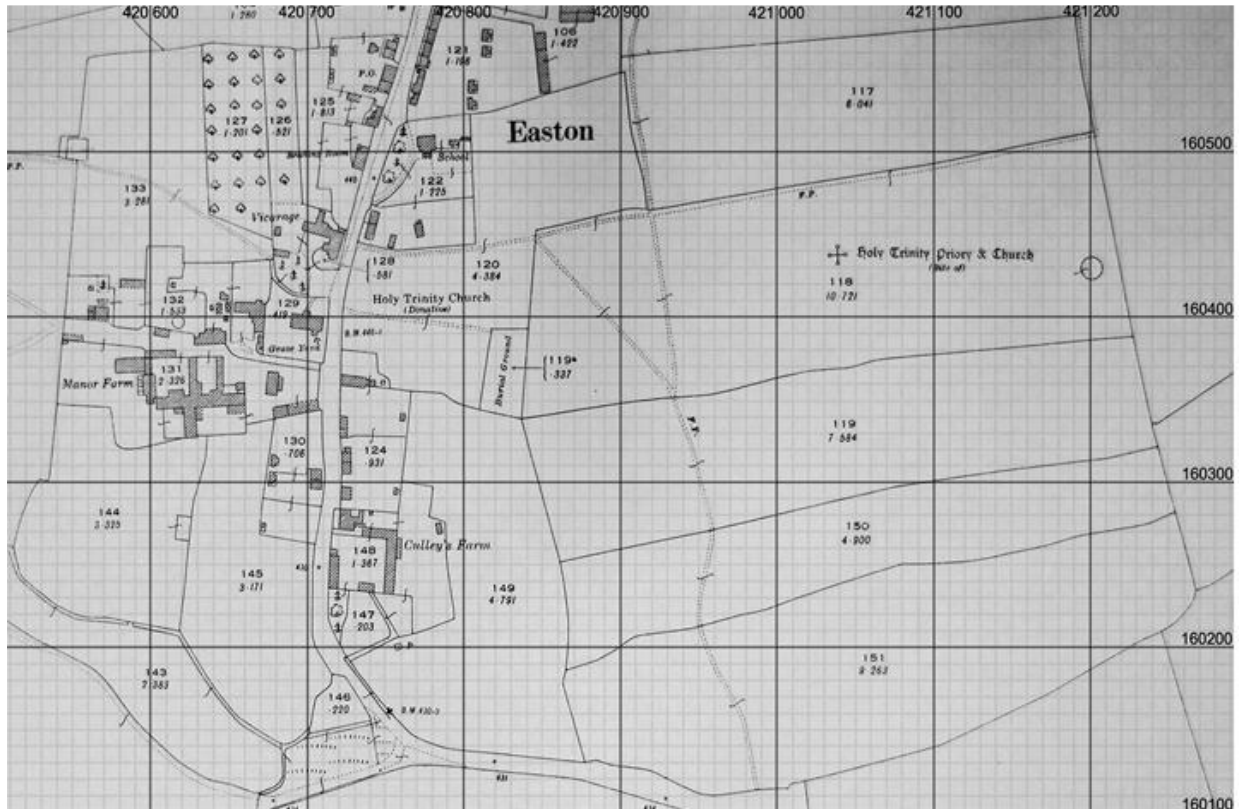


Figure 5. WSA Map of Easton 1846





**Figure 6. Gridded Map of the Site**



**Figure 7. 19711026 Aerial high level photograph of Easton Royal**



**Figure 8. 19461104 Photograph of the Priory site showing the Earthworks**



**Figure 9. 19830415 Photograph of the Priory site showing the Earthworks**



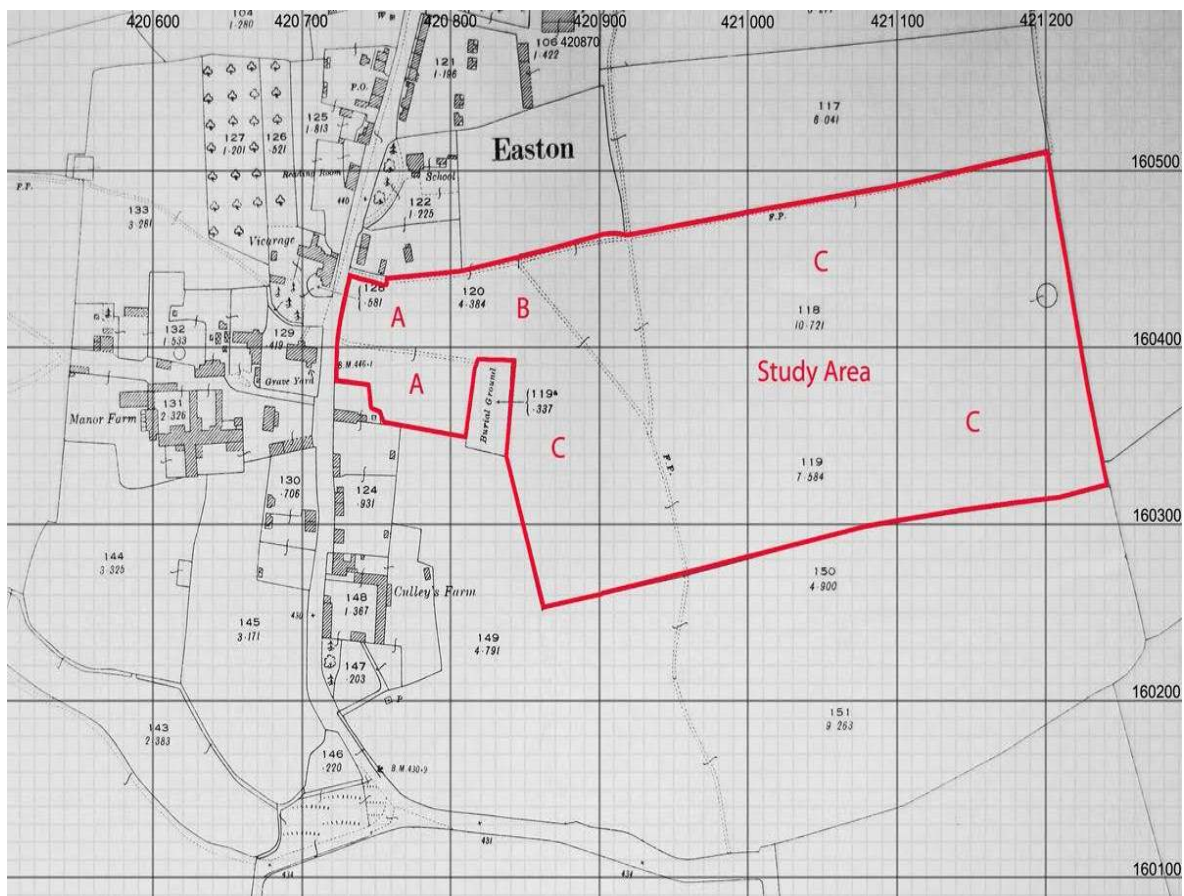


## Chapter 2. Botanical Assessment

### 2.1 Botanical Assessment of Lowland Meadow at Easton Royal

Low-lying meadows immediately east of Easton Royal church were surveyed on 14 May 2014, after a mild winter and warm spring, when growth was well advanced. The study area comprised OS parcel numbers 118 and 119, and part of 120, an area of 8.9ha (c22acres), as shown on the map below. The area lies at about 136m (446ft) above sea level, on a largely level plain overlying greensand, with substantial chalk slopes and downland to the south.

**Figure 10. Botanical Assessment Study Area.**



The whole of the study area comprises lush, thick-sward grassland, highly productive, on damp, rich soils. The flora is heavily dominated by grasses throughout, with a sparse and intermediate broadleaved herb flora. Apart from clover *Trifolium repens* and *T. campestre* most of the broadleaved species are annuals, invasive and adventitious, with most areas having few or no perennial herbs.

Area A, whilst the most floristically rich, consists of uneven-sward, hummocky terrain, characterised by species quickly colonising disturbed and exposed ground. Species include nettle *Urtica dioica*, dandelion *Taraxacum officinale*, creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense*, some spear thistle *C. vulgare*, daisy *Bellis perennis*, localised heath speedwell *Veronica officinalis* and with abundant bulbous buttercup *Ranunculus bulbosus*.

**Figure 11. Area A looking west towards church. Dense grass with abundant bulbous buttercup. Hummocky, disturbed and enriched soils have enabled colonisation of invasive species in the sward**



**Figure 12. Area B looking eastwards. Very heavy grass cover, fewer buttercups, with dandelion and clover and occasional patches of nettle or invasive species.**





Grass cover increases gradually further eastwards. Area B may have over 90% grass domination, but still with clover very common, and with occasional creeping and spear thistle, a few sow-thistle *Sonchus oleraceus*, frequent bulbous buttercup, some creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*.

Area C, comprising the majority of the site, is very heavily grass dominated, with some metre squares comprising 100% grass. Common grasses include foxtail *Alopecurus pratense*, sweet vernal grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, with less common bent grass *Agrostis sp.*, and false oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*. Clover and both bulbous and creeping buttercup species remain frequent. Other species noted include ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, dandelion, germander speedwell *Veronica officinalis*, and common chickweed *Stellaria media*. An unidentified, wide-bladed grass was noted around two ponds.

**Figure 13. Area C, looking towards new graveyard. Very dense grass-dominated sward**



**Figure 14. Area C looking south-east. Floristically non-diverse grass sward.**



**Figure 15. Pond at eastern end of study area, looking west towards church.**





## 2.2 Fauna

Brimstone and orange-tip butterflies were noted. The foodplant of the latter- cuckoo flower *Cardamine pratense*, was not seen in the study area, but grows nearer watercourses to the south. Both buzzard and red kite were seen circling the area. Frogs have been noted in the area previously.

## 2.3 Conclusion

The whole of the study area is characteristic of agricultural pasture, managed to maximum grass production. Part of the area may have been arable historically, and has certainly been enhanced by either re-seeding or direct drilling into the sward. It is probably in a naturally fertile valley and plain, subject to occasional enrichment by flooding. It has high nitrogen levels through clover establishment, and has been subject to manuring or inorganic fertilizers. All these practices encourage dense grass growth, where broadleaved herbs, especially rosette-leaved species, are unlikely to survive. Broadleaved herb species diversity is extremely low, and those species present are common or very common, often invasive and rapidly colonising exposed and disturbed soils. No noteworthy or uncommon plants were identified, nor any species typically associated with long-established and traditionally managed meadows.

Any short term (less than one year) disturbance to the ground, covering a modest area (less than one hectare – probably only a fraction of this) through an archaeological excavation, would not cause damage to the floristic interest, which would re-establish and recover rapidly. The excavation site would be floristically indistinguishable from the remainder of the site within a year or two.

Good practice should be followed with turves cut and set aside for later re-emplacement. No work should be undertaken in the immediate vicinity of the current two pond sites without further examination of flora or other potential interests.

Work undertaken by Graham Bathe (formerly Natural England) and Joanna Ramsay (Natural England, here working in a private capacity).

15 May 2014