

LANDSCAPE ARCHAEOLOGY AT WYFOLD, OXFORDSHIRE



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Abstract

As part of a wider programme of field archaeology and landscape archaeology, a broad range of activities at Wyfold Grange, Oxfordshire, was undertaken by volunteers from South Oxfordshire Archaeology Group in 2022. These included geological and hydrogeological surveying, metal detecting and tree surveying. As a result of these, and extensive desk-based research, an understanding of the landscape around Wyfold Grange is developed. Putting Wyfold into its historic and geographic context, an archaeological walk has been devised and is described elsewhere.

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	27
1.1 The Wyfold Estate	27
1.2 Wyfold Grange.....	28
1.3 Aims of the present work	29
2. GEOLOGY AND HYDROGEOLOGY	30
2.1 Aims and Objectives	30
2.2 Base Geology and Land Use	30
2.3 Hydrogeology of the pond.....	31
2.4 Main Aquifer Levels	32
2.5 Conclusions.....	34
3. METAL DETECTING	34
3.1 Introduction.....	34
3.2 Aims and objectives	35
3.3 Methodology	35
3.4 Results.....	35
3.5 Conclusions.....	37
4. TREE SURVEY	39
4.1 Aims and Objectives	39
4.2 Methodology	39
4.3 Results.....	41
5. ROADS	41
5.1 Aims and Objectives	41
5.2 Routes through Wyfold Grange	42
5.3 Droving routes in southeast England.....	43
5.4 Historic landscape analysis of droving routes	44
5.5 Droving at Wyfold	44
5.6 Conclusions.....	47
6. BIBLIOGRAPHY	47

1. INTRODUCTION

This report is one of a series of three. The other two, *Excavations of the Earthwork at Wyfold Grange Oxfordshire* and *Post-Medieval Archaeology at Wyfold Grange* focus primarily on excavations and survey work undertaken at Wyfold Grange in 2022, revealing the late Anglo-Saxon Earthwork and other features. This report takes a broader view of the area known as Wyfold. Though not mentioned specifically, it is believed that Wyfold land was part of the Royal estate of Benson (Bensington) at the time of Domesday Book (Miles and Brookes, 2021, p16). It was granted to Thame Abbey c 1153 (see below) and remained in its possession until the dissolution.

1.1 The Wyfold Estate

The extent of the Wyfold holding is, today, unclear. Undoubtedly the land which might be called the “Wyfold Estate” (although this is not a term found in medieval historical records) changed many times over the centuries but there is insufficient evidence to map more than a few points in the story. In Figure 1 an attempt is made using QGIS software to summarise the known facts. For convenience a modern map (OpenStreetMap) is used as a base map, over which the parish boundaries, as they were in 1851 (Ordnance Survey Boundary-Lines: slightly modified by the authors to improve precision as needed), are overlain. As can be seen, the southeast end of the 1851 Checkendon parish and the NW end of Rotherfield Peppard are broadened out to form a large oval area, shaded pink. This shaded area is an estimate of land forming the “Wyfold Estate.” In the east and for part of the northwest side it has been necessary to reconstruct the boundary and this has been done by following strong features shown on Lidar images of the area. It is acknowledged that this is a somewhat arbitrary process and other choices could have been made but a significantly different outcome would be difficult to justify.

The area enclosed by the suggested boundary is 2240 acres. The area of 1851 Checkendon less that portion in Wyfold is about 1654 acres and that in Rotherfield Peppard is 1454 acres so Wyfold can be seen as a significant holding.

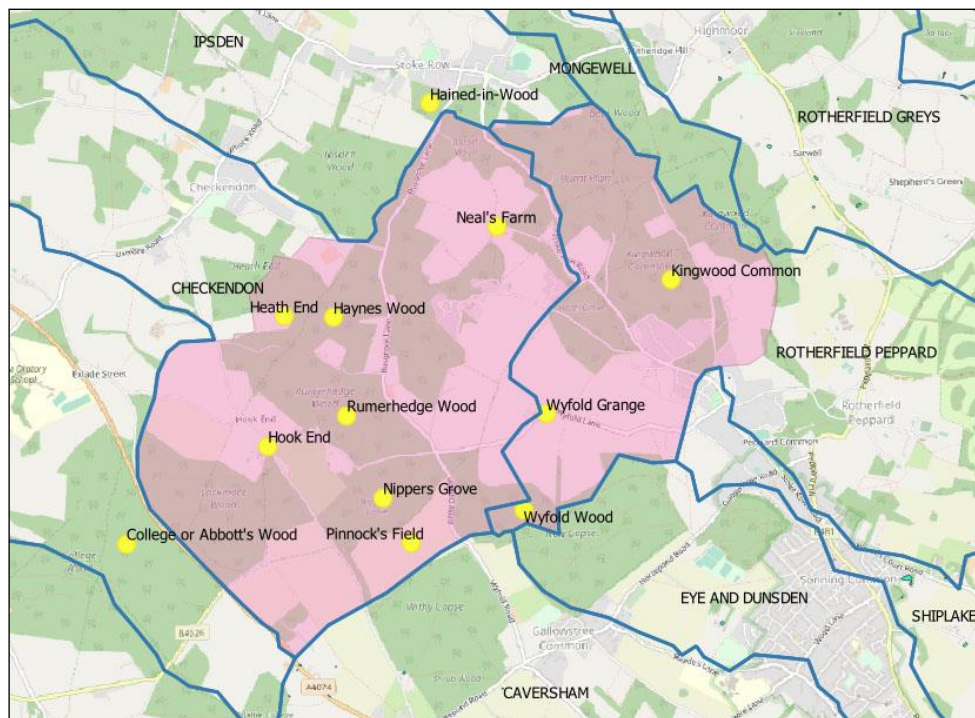


Figure 1. Possible extent of the Wyfold Estate (light shaded area) with 1851 parish boundaries over modern base map

The additional points marked on the map are those for which useful historical data are available:

- ‘Wyfold Grange’ is the site of the earthwork enclosure, assumed to be the administrative centre of the area since it was created as a separate entity retained as part of Benson Manor. This was possibly in the 9th to 11th century when the Benson estate was being fragmented, but we do not have the charters to prove this.
- The name, Wyfold, is first recorded as a grant of “Wifaldam” to Thame Abbey in 1153 (Regesta Regis Stephani ac Mathildis, Cronne and Davis, 1956-68). ‘Rumerhedge Wood’ is assumed to be the present-day manifestation of “Ruchmareshegge” also granted to Thame Abbey in the same charter.
- A charter of 1230 (Salter, 1930) states that ‘Pinnokes Feld’ belonged to ‘the Abbot and Convent pertaining to the grange of Wifalde’. Preece (2005) suggests that this may be Pinnocks Hither Field of 32

acres and a Pinnocks Further Field of 33 acres identified in the Tithe Award of 1841. Further, these may be the two virgates leased by Peter Cok in the hundred rolls (Rot. Hund. II, 64).

- Preece (2005) suggests that Hained-in-Wood is derived from “Hainge”: 40 acres, half a wood granted to Thame Abbey by the lord of part of the manors of Checkendon and Little Stoke. ‘Hained-in-Wood’ was in Little Stoke in Ipsden (1851 boundaries). In 1263 there was a law case concerning a wood called “Hawge Basset” which, Preece suggests, must have been part of what is now called Basset Wood.
- We propose that, as an alternative assignment, “Hainge” may have become Haynes which is within the curtilage of the proposed estate, shown on our map. This assignment seems likely as the charter (Salter, H.E. (ed.), Thame Cartulary, 1948) says the 40 acres are in “Bensinton”, not Checkendon or Little Stoke.
- ‘Kingwood Common’ is first recorded as “Kingeswode” in the 1279 Hundred Rolls (Rot. Hund. II, 33,764), in which Andrew of Kingwood was noted as a tenant of Benson Manor (which included Wyfold). Thame Abbey is said to have appropriated 200 acres of royal demesne where the tenants of Wyfold held common rights in the 13th century (VCH XVI p307).
- ‘Hook End’ is recorded in 1584 (National Archives C66/1252 mm. 36-7) and may refer to the Hook family recorded earlier as Wyfold tenants in the Hundred Rolls (VCH XX p80).
- ‘Neal’s Farm’ was first noted in 1236 but was an independent estate originating as a freehold of Benson (VCXH XX p90). It was one hide (perhaps around 120 acres) in 1236 but only half a hide in 1270. It had become part of the Wyfold Court estate by 1844.
- In an indenture of 1355 (Calendar Close Rolls, 178) the abbey sold the crop of the wood “Notepotegrove” which Preece (2005) identifies as the wood now called Nippers Grove.
- ‘Heath End’ house was built by the Lord of Checkendon in 1851 “at Wyfold” (VCH XX p80) but it is not certain if this land was ever part of the Wyfold estate.
- ‘Wyfold Wood’ appears to be part of the estate but no early reference has been found.
- ‘College or Abbot’s Wood’ is in South Stoke, outside of Wyfold, and confirms its western boundary. South Stoke was in Dorchester Hundred and belonged to Christ Church College.

1.2 Wyfold Grange

Wyfold Grange itself (centred on SU 68840 81640) lies near the summit of a low hill in the Chilterns, approximately 4km east of Woodcote and 1km north of Gallowstree Common. The site includes a prominent roughly circular ditch and bank earthwork with a diameter of about 210m.

The general layout of the site in the context of its immediate environs is clearly shown on the 1898 Ordnance Survey 25" map, Figure 2. The present west-east road passes around the north side of the earthworks, and the bank and ditch are clearly visible from it. It has been suggested (Peberdy, 2012, p91) that this route, at one time known as the "Kings Road" may have been used as a drove road between Goring and Henley, perhaps as far back as Saxon times. This is discussed below.

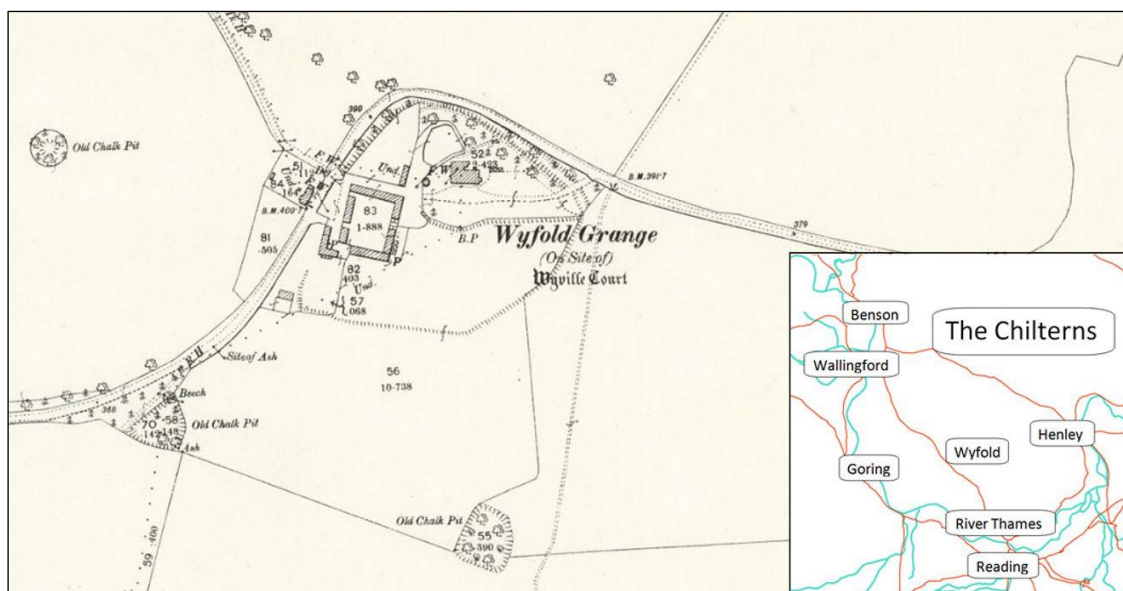


Figure 2. Wyfold Grange as shown on 25" Ordnance Survey map 1898. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

Despite the abundant historic record and the clear visibility of the site from the road, there has been very little previous archaeological study. The Historic England record Hob Uid: 241901 is inconclusive and generally inconsistent with our findings (see our report *Excavations of the Earthwork at Wyfold Grange*. Visits by the Berkshire Archaeological Society in 1895 (Reading Mercury of 5 October 1895), by SOAG (Preece, 2005) and comments by the first Lord Wyfold (1932) also shed little new archaeological light.

Tim Southern, a former SOAG member has undertaken work, including geophysical surveys, on the site of Park Farm just to the north of Wyfold Grange (MA Thesis, 2006). This has provided much useful background information but the fieldwork did not extend to the Grange site itself.

1.3 Aims of the present work

The aims of the present work were therefore to gain a clearer understanding of the environs of Wyfold and, in particular, Wyfold Grange using a wide range of modern landscape archaeological techniques.

High resolution Lidar DTM data has kindly been supplied by the Chilterns Conservation Board "Beacons of the Past" project and is shown in Figure 3 (LRM visualisation by the author). This shows that most of the features shown on the 1898 map are still apparent. A number of these are discussed below and in the two accompanying reports referenced above.

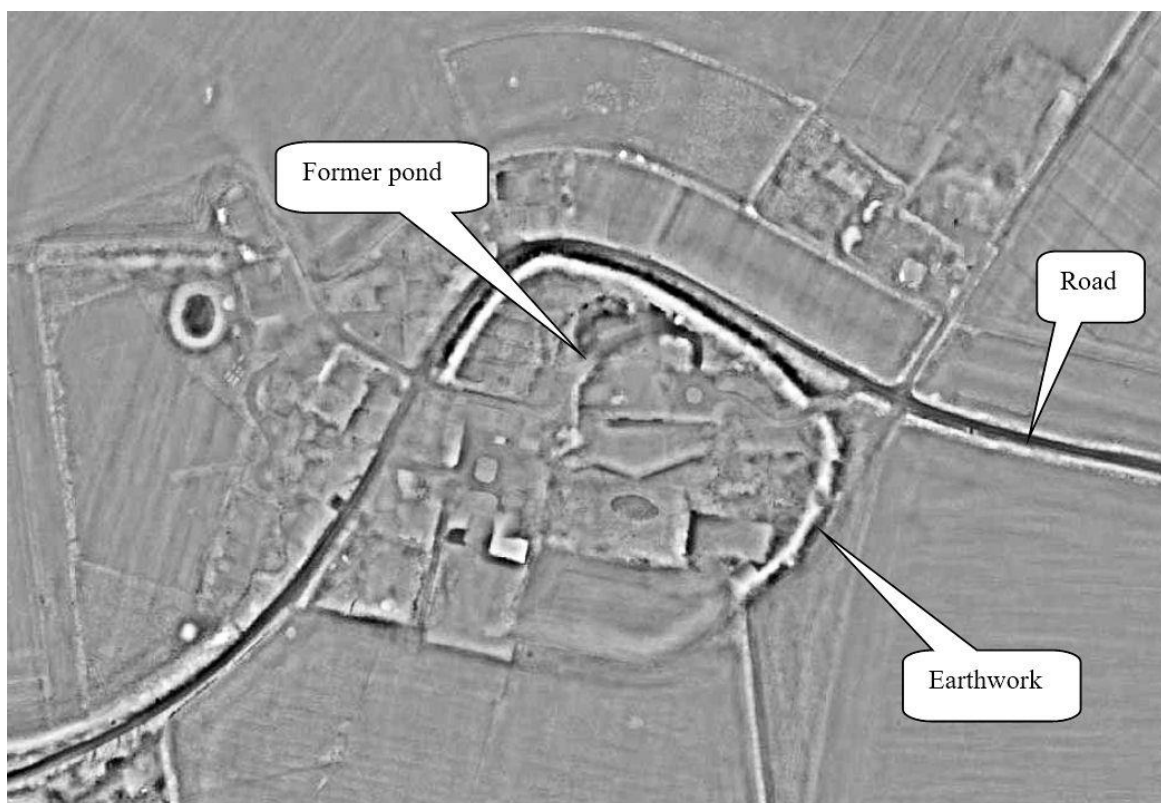


Figure 3. Lidar image of Wyfold Grange

A notable feature, which may have been of historic significance, is the large roughly circular pond within the earthwork. This was drained in the mid 20th century and the means by which this was achieved along with the broader geology and hydrogeology is discussed below.

An extensive metal detecting survey was undertaken across the whole of the accessible site in order to obtain a picture of settlement and use of the site through time and also to assist in dating features in the associated excavations.

Parts of the site, in particular the northern half of the earthwork, are covered with large trees. A tree survey was undertaken of the largest examples of the most dominant species to determine if and how these might be related to the postulated drove road and the development of the site in modern times.

From the evidence of the metal detecting and tree surveys and from 18th century mapping, the drove road is discussed.

Finally, as part of SOAG's efforts to make local archaeology accessible to a wider public, a short archaeological walk has been developed to take in Wyfold Grange and other, probably Iron Age, sites of interest. (See separate report *Wyfold Grange, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Walk*).

2. GEOLOGY AND HYDROGEOLOGY

2.1 Aims and Objectives

- To gain a clear understanding of the geology of the site to assist in interpretation of the archaeology
- To explain the presence of a pond on historic maps and the reason for its present dry condition
- Briefly to consider the pond's role in water supply at Wyfold

2.2 Base Geology and Land Use

BGS (British Geological Survey) maps (BGS datasets) indicate that Wyfold Grange sits on a chalk bedrock (Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation, Seaford Chalk Formation and Newhaven Chalk Formation. Sedimentary bedrock formed between 93.9 and 72.1 million years ago during the Cretaceous period) with superficial deposits of “clay with flints” (Beaconsfield Gravel – Sand and gravel. Sedimentary superficial deposit formed between 2.588 million and 11.8 thousand years ago during the Quaternary period). Figure 4 shows the approximate boundary of this deposit. Just 0.5km east towards Peppard Hill a Thames gravel superficial layer is indicated.

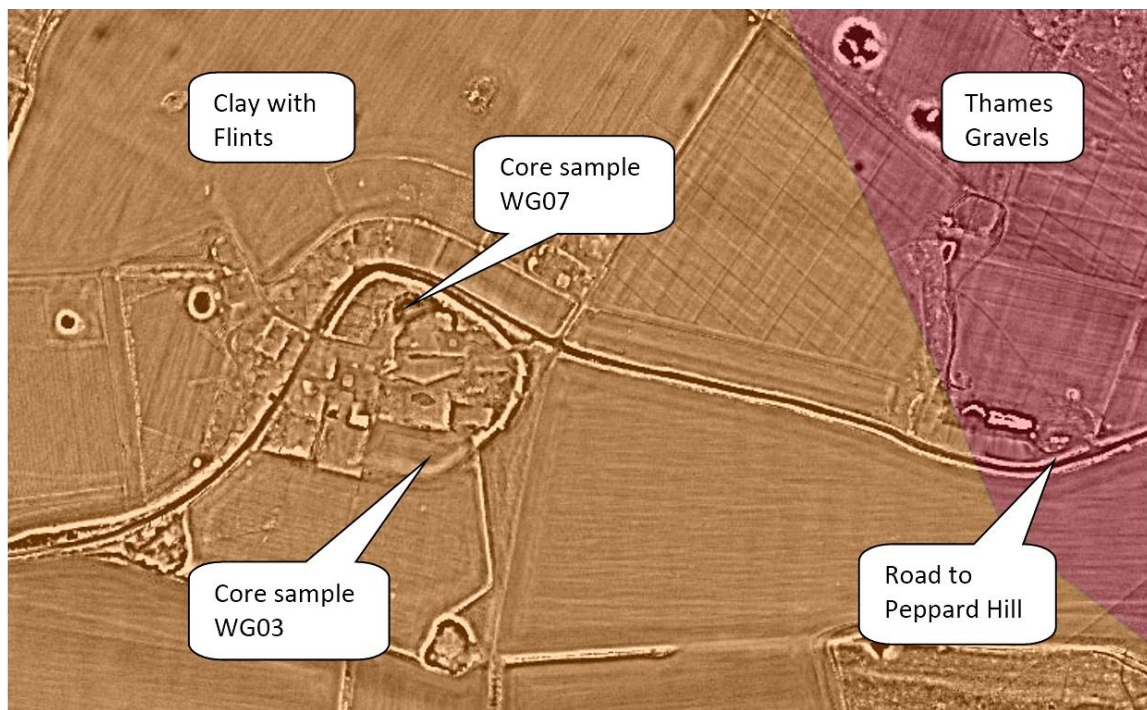


Figure 4. British Geological Survey map showing superficial deposits

A coring programme, designed primarily to assist in the associated excavations, using a 25mm diameter hand coring tool and mallet was undertaken at various points across Wyfold Grange. Core samples taken in the survey were labelled in the form WGxx.

From this programme it appears that the superficial geology over much of the site is more complex than that suggested by BGS. The locations of core samples discussed below are indicated in Figure 4. The record of core WG03, obtained in the field to the south of the manor, is shown in Table 1 and is representative of conditions over much of the site.

Depth (cm.)	Texture	Stoniness	Munsell colour	Colour description	Horizon boundary	Comments
0-7	topsoil	nil	7.5YR 3/3	dark brown		
					sharp	
7-52	clay	<5%	5YR 4/6	yellowish-red		
					sharp	
52-82	clay	nil	7.5YR 4/6	red		moist
					sharp	
82-	clayey	5%	2.5YR	Red		distinctly sandy and, to

150	sand		4/6			the eye, redder than the overlying sediment; this horizon not reached in WG02; probably the natural
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Table 1 Auger Survey Record WG03 at SU 6886981573

A sample was also collected from just below the soil level at Peppard Hill (approximately 1.2km to the east of the Grange) and was found to be identical in colour and texture to the red sandy material at Wyfold Grange. This is taken to be the Thames Gavel recorded by BGS. Thus it appears that the superficial geology over much of Wyfold Grange is in fact a layer of yellowish-red material (taken to be the clay with flints recorded by BGS) overlying a red clay layer (at a depth of approximately 0.5m) which in turn overlies the red Thames gravel layer (at a depth of approximately 0.8m). The underlying chalk bedrock was not reached in any core sample across the site, some of which extended to a depth of over 3m.

Arable fields and paddocks surround the site stretching to woodland at about 0.5km almost enclosing the area. The agricultural land classification for the land around Wyfold Grange is listed as Grade 3, "Good to Moderate" (Natural England). But most of the land in the wider Wyfold area outlined above, which is predominantly woodland, is classified as Non-agricultural.

In addition to the main house within the earthwork enclosure, a number of domestic residences forming a small hamlet have been developed north and east of the Grange in modern times. The former stables in the southwest of the enclosure are also now converted for residential use.

2.3 Hydrogeology of the pond.

by Dr Dave Carless and. Paul Whitehead

Maps of Wyfold Grange in the 19th and early 20th centuries (for example Figure 2 above) show a substantial pond within the earthwork enclosure, to the north of the house. Water is scarce in the Chiltern Hills and so this pond is considered to have been a significant asset in historical times potentially facilitating both local animal husbandry and droving along the ancient route from Goring to Henley (see below).

Currently the remnants of the pond are a firm dry grassy area crossed by a concrete driveway. Periodically (roughly once per decade) the area floods and can remain flooded for a period of a few months.

Most of the site however is reasonably free draining and so it would seem that the typical superficial levels (Clay with Flints above Thames Gravels) are not impervious. Therefore, it seems likely that the pond area is formed as a natural perched aquifer (see Figure 5) with a lens of impervious materials sitting above the main Chilterns aquifer. This would allow the pond to hold water for extended periods even when the main aquifer is low, and to be topped up with run-off from the surrounding area, and by the main aquifer if, and when, it rises sufficiently high. This latter point is considered below.

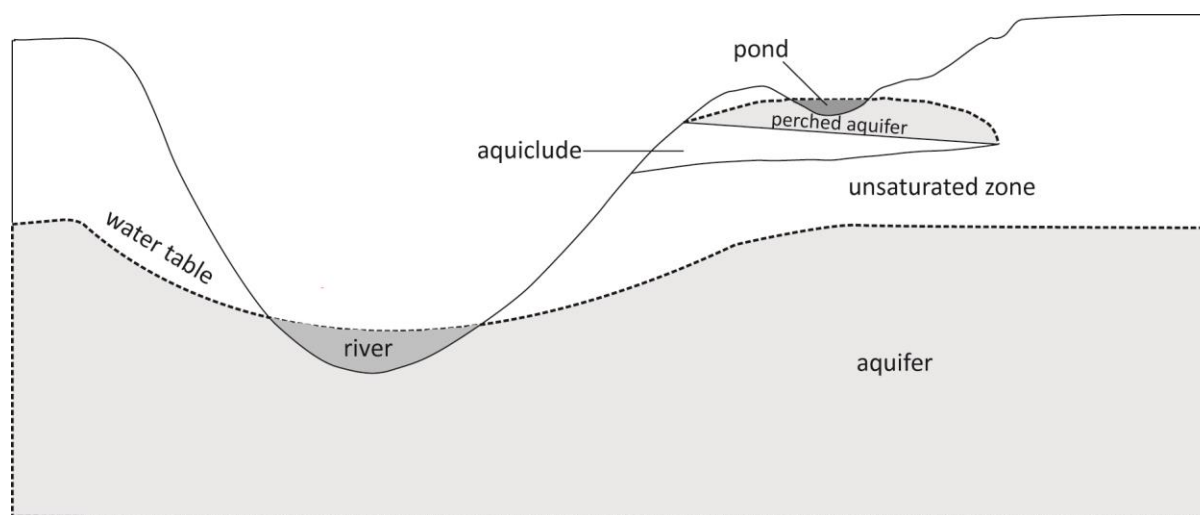


Figure 5. Illustration of a Perched Aquifer

Located in the modern driveway (north of the house) crossing the pond area, is a concrete vertical shaft approximately 600mm square and 9.4m deep. Discharging into each of the four sides of this, at a depth of approximately 3m, is a ceramic pipe of approximately 200mm diameter. It seems highly likely that these pipes are land drains and that the shaft is designed to penetrate the impervious superficial layer causing the pond to be drained to the main aquifer which is sometimes visible within the shaft. From the very similar modern

appearance of the concrete of the driveway and of the shaft it seems likely that both were constructed at the same time. An aerial photograph taken in 1947 shows that the driveway had not at that time been constructed but another, taken in 1955, showed that by then it had, and so the draining of the pond can safely be dated to between 1947 and 1955.

At times when the main aquifer is very high it can still rise above present ground level causing the occasional flooding.

2.4 Main Aquifer Levels

The Chilterns Chalk aquifer is monitored, as part of the national network, at Stonor Park, located 9.2km to the northeast of Wyfold Grange. This has a record of 62 years, 1961-2021. BGS states “*The Stonor Park well, measuring levels in the Chalk aquifer near Henley on Thames. (The upper shaded area shows highest ever recorded levels and the lower shaded area the lowest. Dotted line is average). Its hydrogeological setting, and the absence of major abstractions in its vicinity, mean it is often cited as a 'typical' chalk observation well.*” Records for the last 4 years are shown in Figure 6 below.

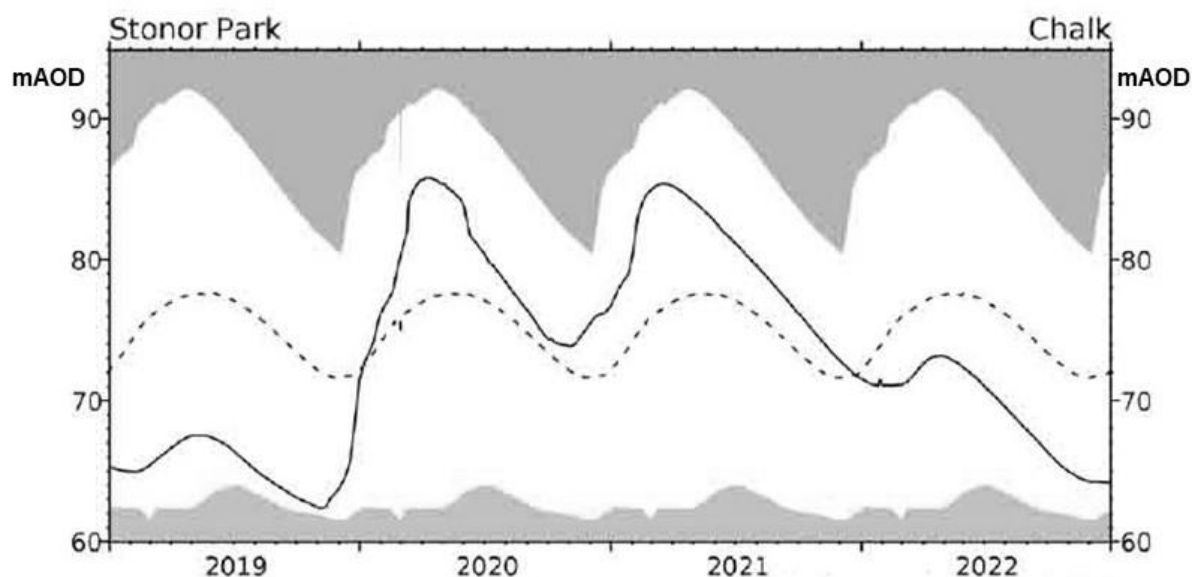


Figure 6. Hydrograph for Stonor Park 2019-2022

Ground Level at Wyfold Grange (taken as the top of the vertical shaft) is 120m AOD (Above Ordnance Datum). As this is very close to Ground Level at Stonor park (121m) it is estimated that the range of the height of the main aquifer would be very close to that at Stonor Park i.e., 30m. From borehole data at Checkendon Court, 2.8m northwest of Wyfold correlated with the Stonor Park data it can be shown that the range at Wyfold Grange is likely to be in the range 97mAOD to 127mAOD which is within reasonable agreement with observed measurements. This range suggests that occasional flooding of the pond area is to be expected (as ground level=120mAOD). This hydrological assessment is explained in more detail on our web site

2.4.1 Field Research Undertaken

contribution from Tom Walker

In order to ascertain the extent and depth of the former pond (see Figure 3) an auger survey was undertaken. Sample number WG07, shown in Figure 4, was taken close to the present lowest point in the pond area (some 28cm below the 20th century concrete road across the former pond). This was the deepest core sample achieved. The record is shown in Table 3.

Depth (cm.)	Texture	Stoniness	Munsell colour	Colour description	Horizon boundary	Comments
0-22	lost					
22-41	topsoil	nil	7.5YR 2.5/			
41-56	silt	<2%	7.5YR 3/2	dark brown	sharp	
56-74	silt	nil	10YR	dark brown	sharp	some very fine pea gravel

Depth (cm.)	Texture	Stoniness	Munsell colour	Colour description	Horizon boundary	Comments
			3/3			
74-85	sandy clay	5%	7.5YR 4/1	dark grey	sharp	slightly larger pea gravel with occasional stone to 2cm
					very sharp	
85-195	sandy clay	nil	7.5YR 4/6	strong brown	vague	very yellowish sediment; 168-195 some black flecks: organic with one linear streak, probably old root
195-235	clayey sand	nil	7.5YR 5/8	strong brown	sharp	much more sandy; 5mm organic band at 227
235-280	clayey sand	nil	10YR 5/6	yellowish brown	sharp	
280-290	clayey sand	nil	10YR 5/6	yellowish brown	sharp	
290-318	sandy clay	nil	10YR 5/6	yellowish brown	sharp	
318-335	sandy clay	nil	7.5YR 6/8	strong brown	sharp	
	STOPPED BY STONES					
	COMMENT					
	This core is slightly to one side of the current lowest part of the pond hollow; clay was reached at 74cm which probably indicates the base of the water when the pond was open. The clays below this have varying amounts of sand. The lack of humic sediments above the clay is consistent with a 'closed' pond with little colluvial run-off from the pond sides					

Table 3. Auger Survey Record WG07 at SU 68849 81712

This record is radically different from WG03 (Table 1), typical of most of the site. WG07 shows thick layers of impervious clays which were waterlogged, despite the installation of field drains. The presence of these waterlogged clay layers, which are assumed to be natural, provides evidence to support the perched aquifer hypothesis.

A programme of weekly monitoring of water levels in the vertical shaft over an extended period of time was initiated, and correlation with Stonor Park data was planned to enable a calibration curve to be generated for Wyfold Grange. Unfortunately, due to the prolonged dry weather running up to and at the time of the fieldwork (Spring 2022) the main aquifer levels (see Figure 6) fell to low levels and the bottom of the shaft became dry for an extended period. It was however noted that after a short period of heavy rain the water level in the shaft rose by several meters and then fell back over a period of just a few days. It appears that the perched aquifer bowl was acting like a funnel filling up the shaft with water that subsequently diffused away into the main aquifer.

The 1841 Tithe Apportionment map of Rotherfield Peppard (TA Peppard) suggests the pond may have been up to 50m at its widest but the Ordnance Survey map of 1898 (Figure 2) suggests a more modest 30m. In both cases the pond is shown as coming close to the house (old house in 1841, new house built in 1871 – see our report, *Post-Medieval Archaeology at Wyfold Grange*). Perhaps the pond was reduced in size in 1871. The present ground level at the house is 64cm higher than the lowest point of the pond and so, even accepting that the pond may have once been deeper, it must have been quite shallow.

The pond area was surveyed with a magnetometer (Figure 3 in *Post-Medieval Archaeology at Wyfold Grange*) to see if any evidence of field drains can be found. No trace could be found but, as the field drains are at a depth of around 3m, this is not a surprising result.

2.4.2 Other ponds in the locality

Other ponds are known along the postulated ancient drove road running past Wyfold Grange (see Section 5 below) and at other locations in the vicinity. Some of these have been mapped and are shown in Figure 7.



Figure 7. Ponds along the drove road. Peberdy's suggested medieval route is followed for much of its length by the proposed drove road. Near Henley, Route(a) is the suggested early medieval route, Route(b) shows the probable line of the drove road into modern Henley, and Route(c) is Pack and Prime Lane

2.5 Conclusions

A programme of coring has shown that the site is covered by a multi-layered structure of superficial deposits over the chalk bedrock (at undetermined depth). A Thames Gravel layer is taken as the “natural” for the excavations described in our reports *Excavations of the Earthwork at Wyfold Grange Oxfordshire* and *Post-Medieval Archaeology at Wyfold Grange*.

At the location of the former pond, the geology has been shown to be different, having a thick layer of impervious clay. This supports the hypothesis that the pond was formed naturally as a perched aquifer. Detailed analysis of the probable variation of the main Chiltern aquifer water level is consistent with observed occasional flooding of the location.

Estimation of the former pond's depth suggests that it would have been unlikely to provide a water source for human consumption (which is considered further in our report *Post-Medieval Archaeology at Wyfold Grange* but may have provided water for livestock, either as part of the husbandry at wyfold or as one of many ponds on or close to the probable drove route.

3. METAL DETECTING

by Lindsey Bedford

3.1 Introduction

A metal detecting survey was conducted in order to better understand how the land on and around the property was utilised over many years. The land surveyed included the main enclosure of Wyfold Grange and two adjacent narrow fields on the opposite side of Wyfold Lane outlined in Figure 8.



Figure 8. Metal detecting locations showing divisions. Base map ©Google 2020.

3.2 Aims and objectives

- To ascertain whether the characterisation of small metal finds vary in the different areas around the main property and wider landscape.
- To see if there may be any evidence for Wyfold Lane, running between the house and the two fields surveyed, having been used as a drove road.
- To determine how the local population from different periods of occupation used the land.

These aims were anticipated to provide a broad picture of the people who lived and worked around Wyfold Grange through looking at their material culture.

3.3 Methodology

Each of the three areas (Field 1, Field 2 and the Area 3 – the enclosure-), were divided into smaller parcels to survey. This was done in the absence of a grid to help locate finds to a section of the area being surveyed. The two narrow fields were split into zones of approximately 50m length by 30m depth; Field 1 had three sections and Field 2 had six. Area 3, the enclosure, for the purpose of this survey, comprised everything within the enclosing ditch and rampart including the lawn, drives, pond and paddock. These earthworks of early medieval date (see our report *Excavations of the Earthwork at Wyfold Grange*) can be traced around much of the perimeter and form a discrete enclosure.

3.4 Results

The finds were categorised as

- *Personal* (find types include: coins, tokens, buckles, spectacles, mounts, badges, jewellery, buttons, cufflinks and shoe cleats),
- *Household and Workshop* (find types include: tools, nuts/bolts/washers, scissors, handles, vessels, blades, hinges, hooks, keys, locks, fittings, spoons and nutcrackers) and
- *Other* (find types include: ploughshares, harness decorations, wire, toys, tines, iron loops, miscellaneous parts, chain link, weights, harmonica parts, garden tools) for analysis. Figure 9 quantifies the finds for each field.

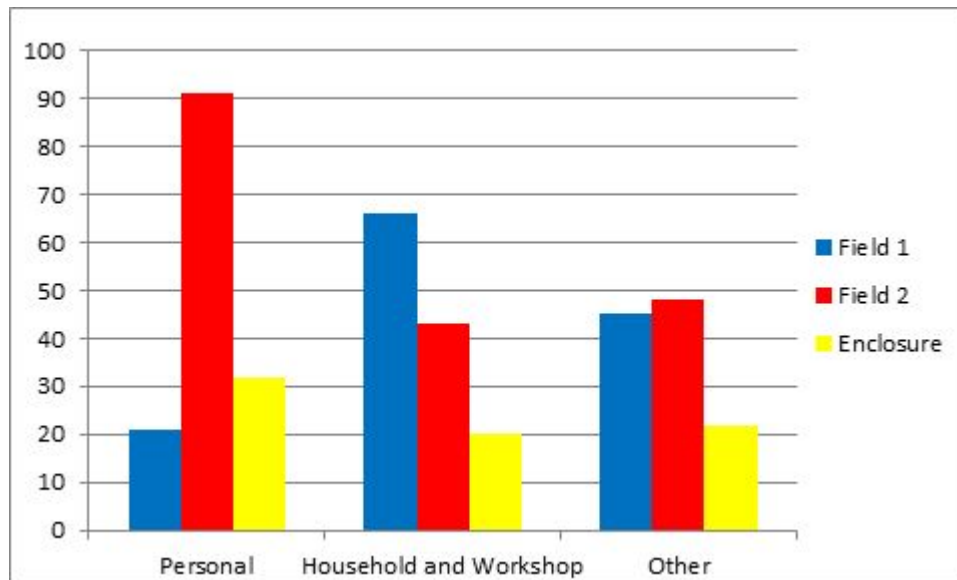


Figure 9. Comparison of find category quantities by location.

3.4.1 Field 1 summary

Half of the finds from all three segments of this narrow field, directly north of Wyfold Grange, were associated with “Household and Workshop” use. With its proximity to, and the long history of, Wyfold Grange and adjacent houses, this is not surprising. It is difficult to date these finds but a partial post-medieval nutcracker (c. 17th- 18th century) is most likely to be the oldest find.

The “Other” category (34% of the total) had a large proportion of horseshoes and horseshoe fragments, the majority of which were Modern but some appear to be a little older. The field has, up until recently, been used as a paddock and these finds suggest it has been for many years. Relatively few “Personal” items were found (16%) but they included: six coins of Modern era and dated from 1922 to 1983; nine buttons ranging from 18th to 20th century and two buckles.

Although the finds were spread across the whole field, the quantity diminished towards the eastern end, further away from the house.

3.4.2 Field 2 summary

The characteristics of the finds from Field 2 were quite different to those in Field 1. Being further east from Wyfold Grange and other dwellings, the number of “Household and Workshop” finds was far less (25%). These were predominantly small Modern items such as nails, nuts, bolts, screws and washers, which could have been from timber structures or fences. Seven swivel shackles were probably from dog leads. An 18th – 19th century thimble may suggest some mending was required in the field and a lead spindle whorl could well be of early date but is difficult to date as the style has remained unchanged for centuries.

Of almost equal quantity (23%) were the “Other” finds. The two largest find types were horseshoes and bullets/shot. The horseshoes were predominantly modern, of various sizes. Due to the time it was taking to retrieve all the ferrous finds, not all horseshoes were collected. The large quantity of ammunition (13% of Field 2 finds) is probably attributable to poaching and gamekeeping. They ranged from lead musket balls, pistol shot, ‘scatter-shot’ (small balls packed in a cartridge) and 12-bore shotgun cartridges (including 19th century pin-fire type). A Georgian coin weight with a crown and initials GR may suggest trading on site. Two sheep crotal bells (one incomplete) demonstrate that sheep were either using this field to graze or passing along if indeed a drove road. The broken bell dates to c. 16th – 17th century and the intact one 17th – 18th century.

Just over half (52%) of all finds in the field were characterised as “Personal” and 29% of these were buttons. These can come from normal losses from field-workers clothes, ‘shoddy’ (shredded textiles used to hold and retain moisture) or from night soil. There were 37 copper alloy and 15 tombac buttons largely dating to the 18th century. The 31 coins produced some of the earliest finds, the oldest being a silver cut quarter Shortcross farthing of Henry II, dating to AD 1180 to 1189 (class 1b London mint). The rest consisted of six post-medieval, 19 Modern, 1 French and four unknown.

3.4.3 Enclosure summary

The finds from the enclosure were a typical assortment of domestic losses. The largest group was “Personal” (43%). Of these, the three highest occurring objects were coins (14), buttons (8) and buckles (7). Other “Personal” objects included two badges, some cufflinks and two earrings. The coins dated from 1560-61 to

1992 and are listed in Table 4. The earliest coin is an Elizabeth I silver groat, extremely worn and perforated to wear as a touchpiece.

Ruler	Denomination	Date
Elizabeth I	Groat	1560-1561
William and Mary	Farthing	1694
George I	Halfpenny	1723
George II	Penny	1750
George III	Farthing	1775
Victoria (2)	Halfpenny	1861 and 1863
Lincoln USA	Cent	1916
George VI	Two shillings	1947
Elizabeth II (4)	50p/Halfpence/£1/10p	1969/1971/1983/1992
Unknown (1)		

Table 4. The coins from the enclosure, woods and drive.

The buttons are mainly plain, copper alloy but one unusual one has the design of a large dog's head holding a long-tailed rat in its mouth – possibly off a rat-catcher's coat from 19th to 20th century.

Two badges were found, one Modern – a 1953 members badge from Sandown Park racecourse, and the other a medieval pilgrim badge. Dating from c. 1450–1525 it is the earliest metal item found in the grounds of the house. It depicts the martyrdom of St Edmund (Figure 10) who is tied to a tree being shot with arrows from two archers. Its date range includes a recorded visit from the Abbott of Waverley (VCH Oxfordshire Vol. 2) but Wyfold, being a grange of Thame Abbey, could have seen any number of Cistercian visitors one of whom may have made the pilgrimage to Suffolk and subsequently lost their keepsake.



Figure 10. The 15th to 16th century St Edmund pilgrim badge.

The “Household and Workshop” objects (27% of total) included several tools, nails and a large, square-headed iron door stud, possibly from a thick timber front door. Smaller items included a thimble, two book clasps and a possible carriage fitting. A similar number of “Other” finds (30%) included two fragments of crotal bells; one 16th - 17th century and the other 16th - 19th. A total of 17 ammunition-related items were found including a musket ball, pistol shot, 12-bore shotgun cartridges and 0.455 calibre steel-jacketed lead bullets. The later may be related to a Webley revolver the current landowner had found in the past, and the fact that the house was used to billet American servicemen during the World War 2 (which is possibly how the American coin came to be there).

3.5 Conclusions

The whole assemblage of finds from the metal detecting survey largely consisted of a typical array expected from a rural domestic setting with some interesting items in addition. A timeline of the more interesting finds

(Figure 11) suggests continuous activity at the site from the medieval period to the present. No finds earlier than AD 1180 were found.

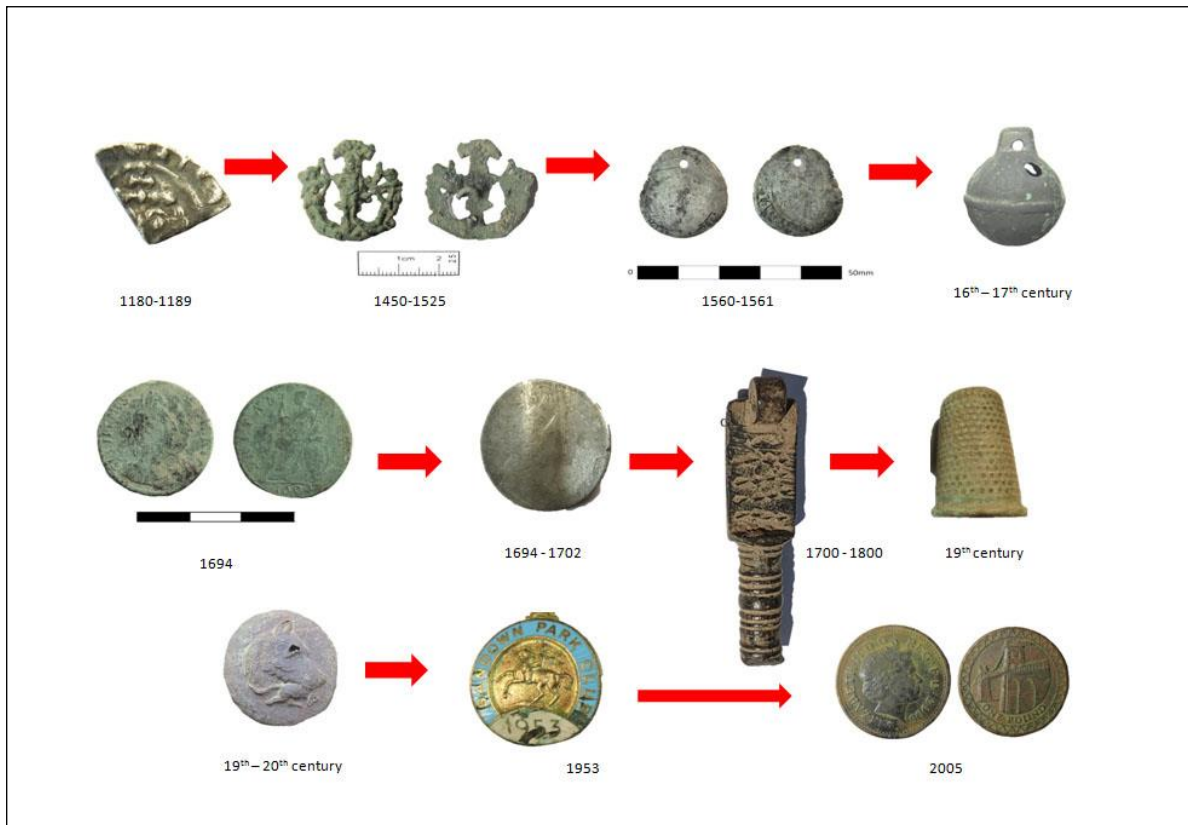


Figure 11. Time line of selected finds from all three areas of Wyfold Grange Metal detecting survey

Field 1 had many “Household and Workshop” items, probably originating from Wyfold Grange over many years which reduced in frequency moving further away from the house. Field 2 however had a more agricultural characterisation with finds reflecting the land being worked rather than being a domestic site. There was probably a small wooden structure that left various iron fittings.

But the most striking difference between Field 1 and Field 2 is the much higher prevalence of “Personal” items in the latter, including a surprisingly large number of coins (mostly post-medieval and modern), tokens, buttons, studs and cufflinks. People clearly used this field for many centuries reflected in the coin loss. The oldest coin (AD 1180 – 1189), dates from not that long after Wyfold became a monastic grange in AD 1154. Jeffrey’s map of 1766 (Figure 12) suggests a widening of the road just east of Wyfold Grange, approximating to the location of Field 2. As discussed below, this road may have been used for droving of sheep and cattle, and this widened section of the road may have afforded an opportunity for animals and their masters to rest. The significant loss of “Personal” items in this field tends to support this idea.

The incomplete earlier crozier bell fragment and slightly later intact one, although providing evidence that sheep were using this land, are not sufficient alone to provide proof that Wyfold Lane was a droving route.



Figure 12. Section of Jeffrey's map of 1766 around Wyfold Grange

4. TREE SURVEY

by Wendy Carless

4.1 Aims and Objectives

The aims of survey were to:

- establish if the trees were an original medieval feature of the earthwork bank or a later addition
- establish whether the age of the Scots Pine trees relates to the drove road
- establish if the trees in the hedgerow to the east of the enclosure date back to those shown the Jeffrey's map of 1766 (Figure 12)

4.2 Methodology

Three species, Oak (*Quercus petraea*), Yew (*Taxus baccata*) and Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*), are dominant on the earthwork and were therefore selected for investigation. For each of the chosen species the largest, and therefore likely the oldest, trees on or near to the earthwork were identified and their diameter measured at a height of 1.3m above ground level, branches and swellings permitting. For each tree its species and approximate grid reference were recorded using a low-resolution GPS receiver.

This technique was extended to the largest trees in the hedgerow to the east of the northeast entrance of Wyfold Grange enclosure including Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*). Similarly, the approach was applied to a small number of large ornamental trees, including one large Yew, a Blue Atlas Cedar (*Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauc') and a Cedar of Lebanon (*Cedrus libani*), within the enclosure.

The location of recorded trees is shown in Figure 13.

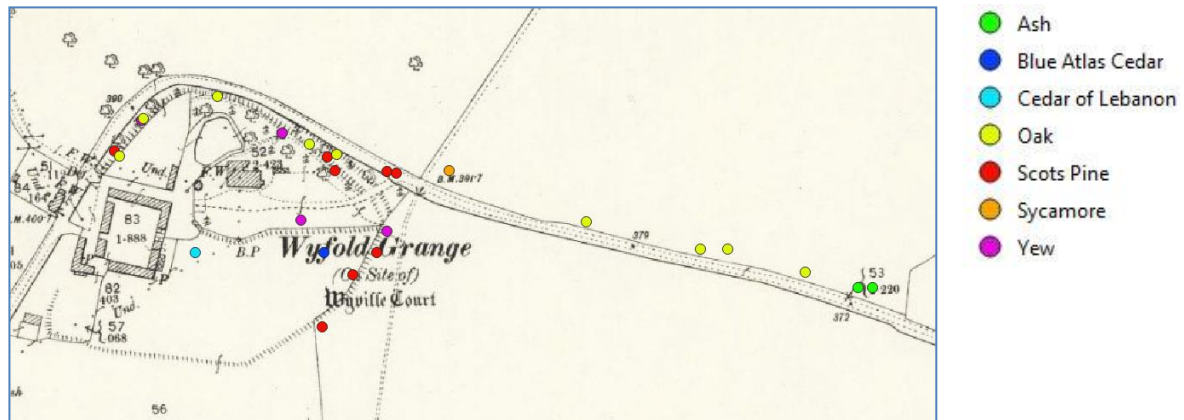


Figure 13. Location of surveyed trees. Base map reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

In line with research undertaken by the UK Forestry Commission (White, 1998) the age of each tree was calculated using a technique based on the three phases of growth of a tree. Early growth develops the core with constant ring spacing as the crown increases in size. In a mature tree (middle age) the area of the trunk increases in a linear pattern, due to a constant canopy size. In old age the tree may not increase in diameter as the canopy deteriorates. Using data collected and collated in White it is possible to estimate the age of a tree based on a measurement of the diameter at breast height (the “dbh method”). The data in White makes allowance for the conditions under which the tree has grown. This enabled two values for age to be calculated assuming best and worst growing conditions (soil type, exposure of site, competition with other species, etc) and from these, an estimated date range.

The dbh method works well for Oak trees (White) assuming that all the trees measured were still growing healthily with no depletion of the crown and consequent reduction in growth rate. If a tree were entering old age with crown depletion it would be older than calculated but this was not evident in the trees selected in this survey.

Yew trees can have very variable growth rates as they can regenerate by layering (White). This technique of aging can therefore be unreliable for older Yew trees. Care was taken to select trees with a single roughly circular trunk to avoid this problem and with the exception of Tree 15 there was no evidence of layering.

Data for Scots Pine were not included in White and so the above methodology cannot be directly applied. The Woodland Trust point out that in Scots Pines girth is an unreliable indicator of age (Woodland Trust).

However, one of the Scots Pines at Wyfold Grange suffered a catastrophic break during the heavy storms in Spring 2022 and a sample of the fallen section was recovered by chainsaw. We are most grateful to Dan Miles for calculating a date of 1866 using dendrochronology (Figure 14).



Figure 14. Dated rings of fallen Scots Pine tree

This sample was taken where the tree trunk had snapped at a height of 9.6m. The age of the tree must of course be older than this and it is estimated that it may have taken about 15 years to reach 9.6m height, putting the estimated germination date of the tree at 1851.

By scaling from the measurement of the core and diameter of this trunk it is possible to obtain values for the core and outer growth rate of this tree and use these to calculate proxy values for the ages of the other large Scots Pine trees on the site. The fallen tree had a dbh similar to the other large Scots Pines on the earthwork and was growing in similar conditions so this approach seems reasonable. A +/-10-year range has been applied to these figures as an estimate in uncertainty of the age.

The larger trees in the hedgerow to the east of the northeast entrance to Wyfold Grange were also measured. All but one of these trees (an Oak – Tree number 23) had been coppiced. The trunks of coppiced trees grow more slowly due to the removal of their canopy (Rackham, 1990, p14). This means that these trees will be older than the age calculated using the above methodology, which is strictly valid only for a standard tree of that girth. The extent to which these trees may be older than calculated is dependent on the frequency and severity of coppicing which, for Wyfold Grange, is unknown and so cannot be estimated here.

4.3 Results

Figure 15 shows the estimated date range for the recorded trees

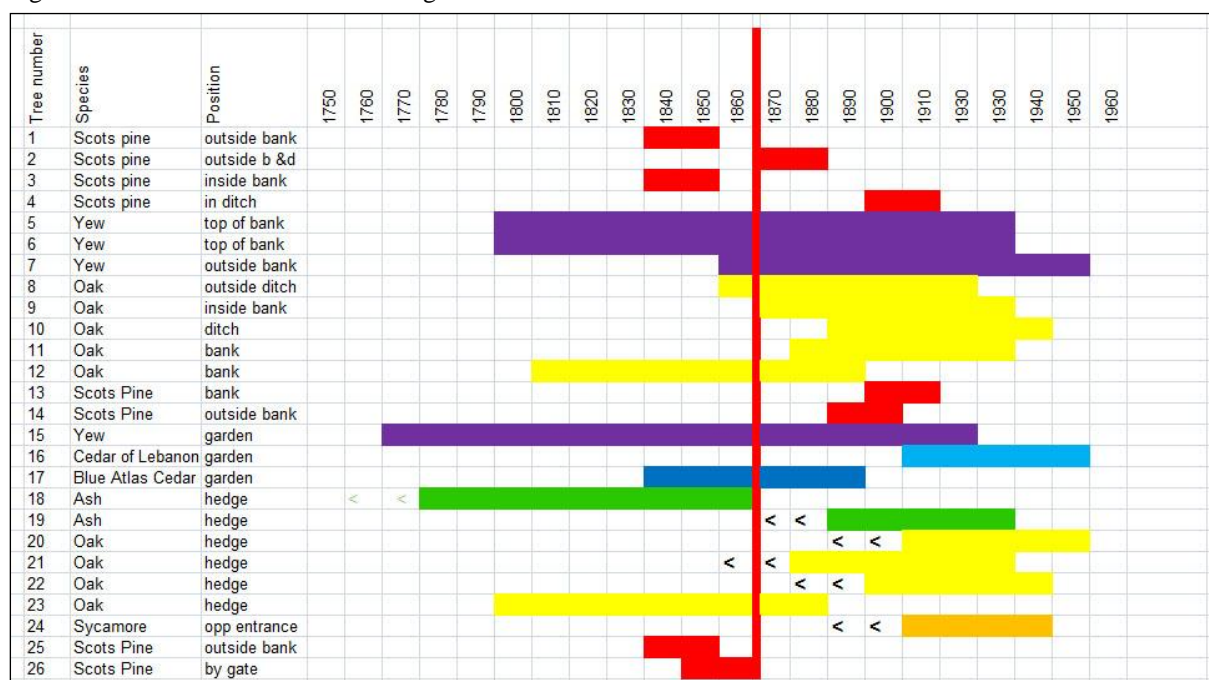


Figure 15. Estimated date range for selected trees. Vertical line is 1871 – date of construction of house.
< indicates may be older.

4.3 Conclusions

The estimated dates of the largest trees of three dominant species on the earthwork are broadly clustered around the date of construction of the new house and may have been planted as part of the associated landscaping. The two ornamental Cedars and the large Yew within the enclosure were consistent with this dating.

Although two of the trees in the hedgerow may be a little older than those on the earthwork it is unlikely that any date back to the map of 1766 or to the time of significant droving along the road (see Section 5 below).

Finally, it is noted that on a visit to Wyfold Grange in 1895 (Reading Mercury of 5 October 1895) Berkshire Archaeological Society noted that “Near it are some magnificent specimens of the wych elm”. These of course have now all gone.

5. ROADS

by Dave Carless and Elizabeth Surrey

5.1 Aims and Objectives

- To understand the morphology of the road network around Wyfold Grange
- To evaluate the possible droving route past Wyfold Grange

5.2 Routes through Wyfold Grange

As seen in Figure 16, a road runs east-west immediately to the north of Wyfold Grange and appears to deviate around the earthwork. Robert Peberdy (2012) has demonstrated a medieval route running over the Chiltern Hills directly from Goring towards Henley. Though parts of the route are now lost, it remains as roads and tracks for most of its length, including the route that runs between Goring Heath and Rotherfield Peppard via Wyfold Grange. Peberdy suggests that, at least the western section (from Goring to Goring Heath) and the eastern section (east of Wyfold Grange), may have been in use as early as late Anglo – Saxon times and that both ends of the route may have been used for local droving between the Thames and the hills.

We suggest that there is a further possibility that there was at one time an additional road from Wyfold heading northwest. This is implied by a line of trees shown on the 1898 OS map which, with the oddly aligned track from Chartersfield Wood, forms small a triangular field to the northwest of the enclosure. This suggests a road line originally running directly from the east (Henley) and joining up with the route into Chartersfield Wood as shown in Figure 16. The route from Goring would then presumably be a later road joining as a T-junction at Wyfold. If so then the enclosure did not need to be built across an existing road, nor was the road diverted around it, but it was simply built within the “T” of the existing roads or, if the Goring branch postdates the enclosure, then it was built just to the south of the existing route. At some later date the northwest route must have been diverted to the south to meet with the (possibly new) entrance at the west side of the enclosure, thereby forming the triangular field and explaining the odd road alignment.



Figure 16. Possible road from Wyfold Grange to northwest over 25" Ordnance Survey 1898base map. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

On the ground there is now no trace of the tree line and the fields have been so heavily ploughed that nothing can be seen in the Lidar. Nevertheless, it seems that the northwest road continued and, with the exception of a 200m ploughed out section north of Neal's Hanging, can be traced on the 1883 6-inch OS map (Figure 17) as a track running to the west of the Victorian Wyfold Court and onward to Judges Road. Possibly this route continues to join the Port Way to Benson.

In the late Anglo-Saxon period much of the land in the southern tip of Oxfordshire belonged to the Benson royal estate. As we have shown in our report *Excavations of the Earthwork at Wyfold Grange*, as this land was broken up into smaller estates in the 9th and 10th centuries, Benson retained control over a number of hamlets and small land holdings, probably for strategic reasons. Wyfold, part of Rotherfield Greys and Henley were three such holdings which may have been retained to secure the route from Benson to the Thames. Similar holdings were retained on a parallel route through Nettlebed and a route from the Thames crossing at Shillingford towards Thame. The route between Wyfold and Judge's Road is not shown in any of the 18th century maps and so must have become unimportant by that time.

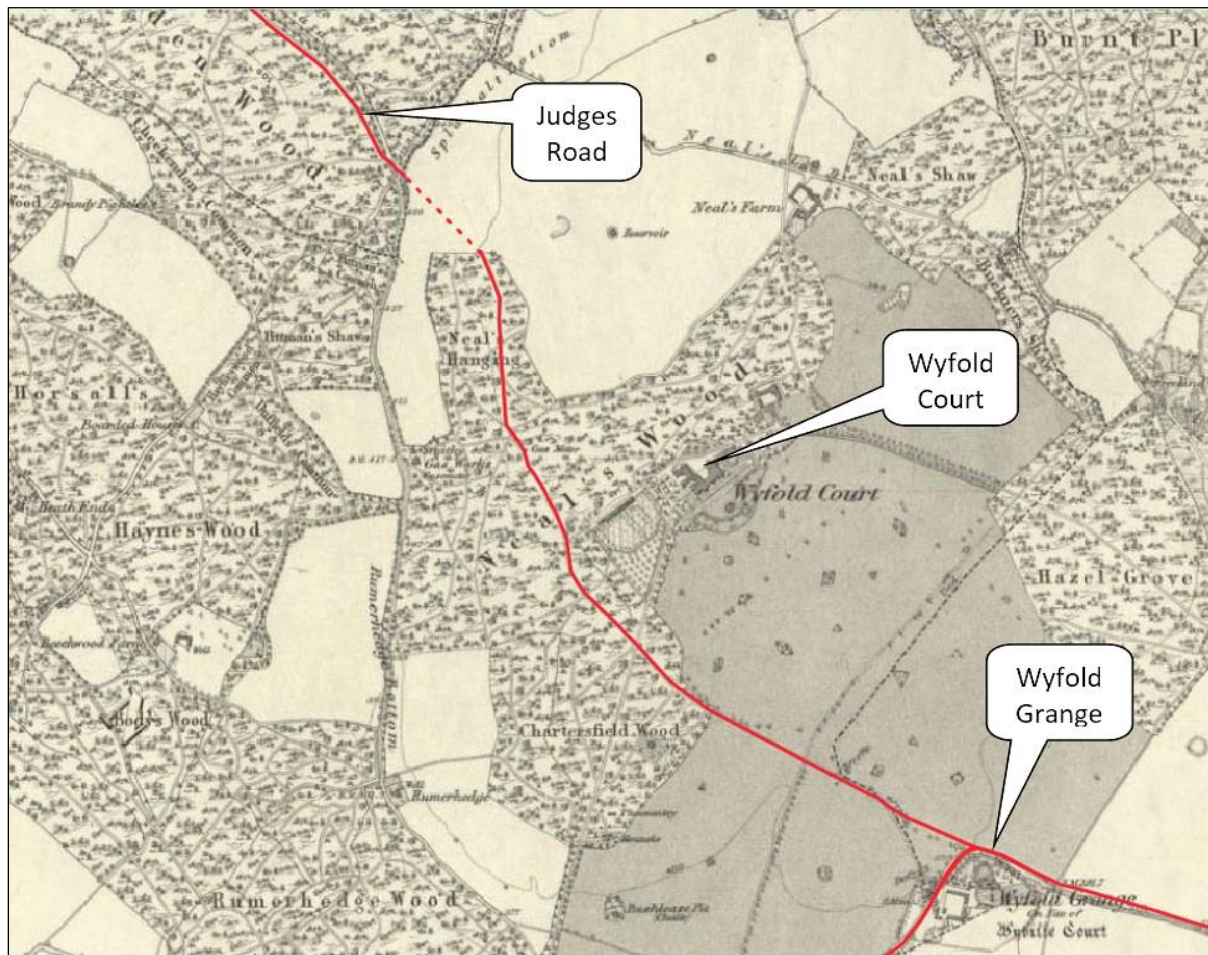


Figure 17. Possible road from Henley towards Benson via Wyfold Grange and Judge's Road over 6" Ordnance Survey map, 1883. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

5.3 Droving routes in southeast England

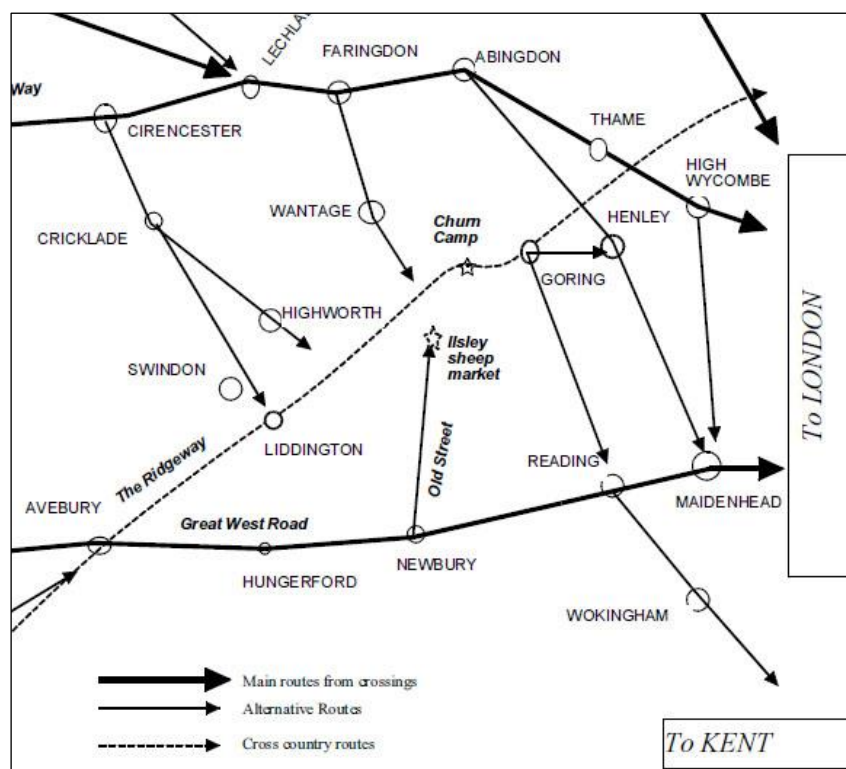


Figure 18. Droving Routes Through Berkshire – After Hammond

In “Droving Across Berkshire” (Hammond, 2008) Nigel Hammond identifies a route running from Goring to Henley (see Figure 18 – an edited version of Hammond’s map). This may have been the route identified by Peberdy (2012), now superseded by the main west to east routes across southern Oxfordshire: the turnpike Wallingford to Henley road (A4130) and Goring to Caversham (B4526 and A4074).

Hindle (2001) shows drove roads across Berkshire and Oxfordshire from Wales to London and passing through Goring and Watlington but does not include a link to Henley. However, he notes that other routes would have been in use depending on individual drover's preferences, local conditions, suitable resting places and the creation of turnpikes and tollgates. Hindle notes that sheep as well as cattle were driven from Wales and gives the peak period as 1830s.

In “Droving in the Chilterns”, Phillip Clapham covers a similar topic centred around Buckinghamshire (Clapham, 2022). He gives the period from the 17th century to c. 1850 as the highpoint of long distance droving, corresponding with the rapid growth of urban populations. After this date, the railways provided quicker transport to market and droving declined. This provides a temporal envelope to the study which broadly aligns with some of the early maps of the area shown below. Of course, it is possible (and likely) that animal movement has occurred over many, earlier millennia, possibly along similar routes.

Although the final destination of the animals would often be markets at, or near, London, it does not necessarily follow that the journey would be undertaken in a single attempt. The growth of urban centres from the late seventeenth century, combined with an increase in the enclosure of lands, resulted in a change in agrarian practice across England (Williamson, 2002). In Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire, the former arable fields were largely enclosed and converted to grassland to support dairy and beef production, primarily in response to growing urbanisation.

Cattle and sheep were brought from Scotland, Wales and Ireland to local markets, around Ladyday (March 25th) to be sold to graziers for fattening prior to transport to meat markets such as Smithfield (Colyer, 1973). Henley acted as a local market, the spring fair in the early nineteenth century being known as the “cattle fair” and a former mayor recalled seeing the whole of Hart Street, Market Place and Gravel Hill ‘thickly occupied by cattle, sheep and horses exposed for sale’. (VCH XVI, 2011).

5.4 Historic landscape analysis of droving routes

The transitory nature of droving makes precise detection difficult - drovers tended not to leave many marks in the landscape and routes may be braided. In open downland, such as Berkshire, in areas of small settlements, wide, often banked tracks are found, which frequently terminate at a ridgeway route. In the Chilterns, the topology is less conducive to the establishment of such tracks and routes may be constricted by narrow valleys and heavily wooded areas. However, drove routes may be identified by a range of evidence such as a variation in road width, the presence of clumps of Scots Pine, public house names including terms such as “drovers”, “dog”, “scotch/scots” and “welsh”. Suitably large areas of common would be required to provide overnight resting points and grazing for the cattle (a “stance”). Water would also be required at points along the route.

Cattle droves covered approximately 16 miles per day, resting and requiring feeding and watering twice per day with a complete rest day every third day (Hammond 2008). The availability of fodder and water were thus essential planning for the drover. Hammond writes that a drover “if he could find no free pasture, arranged overnight rest (a ‘stance’) at a farm or drovers’ inn, enabling the drove to be fed, watered and sheltered.” Suitable stopping points or hospitable farms were often marked by a stand of Scots Pines (Hammond, 2008), by their height easily visible and unusual in southern England.

In “Historic Landscape Analysis” (Rippon, 2004) Stephen Rippon identifies “funnel-shaped droveways” where now “areas of roadside waste...have usually been enclosed, leading to a straight narrow road with distinctive long, thin fields on either side”.

5.5 Droving at Wyfold

Jeffrey’s 1766 map (Figure 12 above) and a number of other 18th century and early 19th century maps (Figures 19 to 22) show a “funnel” shaped piece of land to the west and a widened section of the road to the east of Wyfold Grange (variously labelled Wyfold or Wyvil Court) with a row of trees running along its centre. Today, the presence of a wide “verge”, of approximately 1m width, to the present road is evident around the north-eastern side of the enclosure. This is formed of undergrowth and appears to have evolved naturally, implying the road was once much wider.

The Jeffries and Andrews and Drury maps also show evidence of “purprestures”, an encroachment by an individual (usually a farmer) onto common land, which included roads in medieval England (Rackham, 1986 p200). To the east of Wyfold the northern and southern boundaries of the road show a sudden step widening the road. This is indicative of individuals fencing off part of the highway for farmland, the step being the boundary of the purpresture. It follows that the road would probably have been wider around Wyfold and towards Rotherfield than the maps indicate. Purprestures were often tolerated by the manorial court on payment of an annual fee to the lord of the manor.

By the time of the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1883 (OS 6-inch series Oxfordshire Sheet LIII, 1883) and the OS drawing on which it was based, Figure 22, the road is shown in its present narrow form to the east but the triangular (funnel-shaped) section to the west still evident. In Figure 22 this area is shown as open land, probably “waste” or common as it is crossed by three roads forming a triangle. Although by 1898 the triangular section had largely disappeared, the road approaching Wyfold from the south west and the road around it were still slightly wider than usual as shown on the larger scale OS map of Figure 2.

Both the Jeffries and the Andrew’s and Dury’s maps show a line of trees along the middle of the road to the east of Wyfold. The tree survey (above) has generally recorded ages of around 150 years but with a single oak recording possibly over 200 years (1794 to 1883, depending on growing conditions), which is contemporary with the later maps and the latter period of droving. The tree survey also showed that Wyfold Grange has a number of well-established Scots Pines, which appear to be planted around the enclosure, and the oldest of these were dated to the mid to late 19th century. Though the tree survey found only one tree potentially old enough to date back to the peak of droving, the metal detecting survey (ref to section no) showed a significant loss of “Personal” items in the widened area to the east which suggests an unexpectedly large amount of human activity commensurate with this once being a common area, potentially used as a droving stance.

The distance from Goring to Henley is approximately 12 miles, so at least one stop would have been likely, and possibly a second prior to arriving at Henley to ensure the animals were watered before going to market. Water is scarce in the Chiltern Hills and so the pond at Wyfold Grange would have been a significant asset in historical times, facilitating both local animal husbandry and droving along the ancient route from Goring to Henley. In a notice of auction of the Wyfold estate in Jackson’s Oxford Journal (Jackson, 1870), the estate is described as having “numerous ponds, which have never been known to fail” thus providing an ideal stance. Given the importance of water to any drove route, it would be expected to find significant numbers of ponds along a proposed route. Figure 7 shows ponds marked on the OS 25-inch map of 1898, together with the route suggested by Peberdy – line (a).

Another possible stance is Peppard Common where grazing would have been readily available and there was a pub called The Dog in the 19th century, thought to date from late seventeenth century (Peberdy, 2012) from which the road east, Dog Lane, is presumably named, a possible reference to drovers. Interestingly, there is a Scots Pine recorded in the Woodland Trust Ancient Tree Inventory at grid reference SU6984181736, that is considerably larger in girth than those at Wyfold Grange (3.61m) and could date to the seventeenth century (Woodland Trust Ancient Tree Inventory). This tree is south west of Kingwood Farm on the boundary between Rotherfield Peppard and Shiplake parishes and along the Wyfold route, west of The Dog Inn, so it could mark the remains of a stance. This land could have been common (or the farmer accommodating) and drovers would undoubtedly have preferred free access rather than paying at The Dog Inn. There was also a pond by The Dog, which was filled in the 1950s. The name element “rother” may derive from OE “hriðer” meaning bull, cow or ox (Old English Dictionary), hence “Rotherfield” -Peppard and -Greys. Of course, the “rother” component of these names date from before the period of droving under consideration here and may simply refer to grazing land.

From Rotherfield there are two possible routes into Henley. The first, line (c) in Figure 7, goes north up Pack and Prime Lane, a name widely associated with pack horse trails (Hindle, 2001). The alternative route suggested by Peberdy as a medieval road into Henley, turns north east along Greys Road, to enter Henley via Friday Street, as shown by line (b) in Figure 7 and seems the more probable.

So, in summary, it seems likely that both the Goring to Henley and the possible Benson to Henley routes via Wyfold were likely to have been used by longer distance drovers to access the market at Henley.



Figure 19. Andrew’s and Dury’s map 1774 (Andrews & Drury, 1774)



Figure 20. Davies' map 1793-4 (Davies, 1793)



Figure 21. Cary's map 1818 (Cary, 1818)



Figure 22. Ordnance Survey drawing 1808 (OS Drawings, 1808)

5.6 Conclusions

It has been demonstrated that there may have been a now-lost route from Benson to Wyfold and on to Henley and that this is likely to have predated the road from Goring. The route to the northwest of Wyfold is uncertain and would merit further research.

Cartographic, place-name, water supply and metal detecting evidence all support the likelihood of droving along the present road passing Wyfold although the tree dating evidence has not been clearly identified specimens from the droving era.

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