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Wyfold Grange, Oxfordshire

Excavations and Research

2021-2023

Excavations of the Earthwork at Wyfold Grange

Landscape Archaeology at Wyfold

Post-Medieval Archaeology at Wyfold Grange

A Wyfold Archaeological Walk

Dave Carless

With contributions by
Bill Annan, Lindsey Bedford, Wendy Carless,
Derek Greenwood, Nigel Peters, Elizabeth Surrey,
John Scarborough, Tom Walker, and Paul Whitehead

South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group 2023

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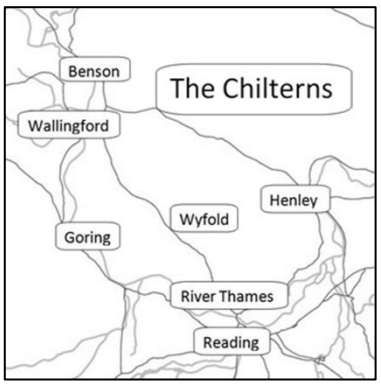
Preface



Wyfold Grange is located on a small lane in the Chiltern Hills between Goring and Henley. It boasts a partially intact earthwork enclosure which has not previously been subject to significant archaeological investigation and no dating has hitherto been possible.

South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group (SOAG) has had an interest in Wyfold Grange for some time. The late Pat Preece, a former member, published a report in SOAG Bulletin No.60 (2005) which, in 2021, caught the attention of the present owner of the grange, resulting in a site visit and subsequent invitation to undertake a fieldwork study. During our preparations it was realised that there was considerable scope for a much wider investigation including not only the earthwork but also the grounds and the wider surrounding landscape. The history of the site and the house were also included.

This broader study was agreed and undertaken in the field in Spring 2022 with deskwork (including both interpretation of the fieldwork results and other historic research) continuing into 2023. I am most grateful for the enthusiasm and generous support of the landowners, and for the great efforts of a team of nearly 50 amateur archaeologists and historians, mostly members of SOAG. Also my thanks to all the contributing authors and our most-helpful editor.

Because of the wide range of historic periods covered and the wide ranging nature of the investigations undertaken we have found it convenient to divide this report into four separate documents, listed below. We hope this will enable readers to focus on their particular areas of interest without distraction from other topics.

The results are too many and too diverse to list here, but perhaps of prime interest, we are able to report that the earthwork has been dated by radiocarbon analysis of a charcoal fragment and was likely constructed in the late Saxon period.

Dave Carless: Project Director and SOAG Chairman

Excavations of the Earthwork at Wyfold Grange, Oxfordshire

Prepared by:

Dave Carless

With Contributions from:

Bill Annan, Derek Greenwood, Elizabeth Surrey and Tom Walker

Abstract

As part of a wider programme of field archaeology and landscape archaeology, excavations of the earthwork at Wyfold Grange, Oxfordshire, were undertaken by volunteers from South Oxfordshire Archaeology Group in 2022. Two trenches were cut through the earthwork and, with the aid of a coring programme, have shown that the earthwork likely formed a complete enclosure of irregular shape, some 210m across at its widest point. The enclosure was formed by a bank and external V-shaped ditch which may have had a total height of approximately 3m or more when constructed. A small fragment of charcoal, recovered from the old soil surface on which the bank appears to have been built, has been radiocarbon dated and provides a "terminus post quem" for the earthwork in the range 987 - 1030 cal AD (95.4% probability). Possible interpretations of this earthwork are discussed and it is suggested that it was constructed in a strategically important location in a time of instability at the end of the Anglo-Saxon period.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report focuses specifically on excavations of the major earthwork at Wyfold Grange undertaken by South Oxfordshire Archaeology Group (SOAG) in 2022. Two accompanying reports, *Landscape Archaeology at Wyfold*, and *Post-Medieval Archaeology at Wyfold Grange* cover related material and are occasionally referred to below.

1.1 Background

Wyfold Grange (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 whole site is roughly elliptical with a maximum diameter of about 210m. The earthwork remains prominent around the northern half but is eroded to a lower profile to the south. According to the British Geological Society the site lies on a superficial layer of clay-with-flints over a white chalk bedrock. This is briefly discussed below and more fully in our report *Landscape Archaeology at Wyfold*. Arable fields surround the site stretching to woodland at a radius of about 0.5km almost enclosing the area.

The west-east road passes around the north side of the earthwork and the bank and ditch are clearly visible from it. It has been suggested (Peberdy, 2012) 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 road, and the hydrology of the pond within the enclosure, are discussed further in our landscape archaeology report.

Though not mentioned specifically in Domesday it is believed that Wyfold Grange and surrounding land was part of the Royal Estate of Benson (or "Bensington") at that time (Mileson and Brookes, 2021, p16). It is first recorded in a grant to Thame Abbey c 1153 and remained in its possession until the dissolution. Subsequent history is well documented (VCH, Oxon Vols. II, XVIII, XX, Preece, 1990, Preece, 2005) and some aspects are further discussed in our report *Post-Medieval Archaeology at Wyfold Grange*

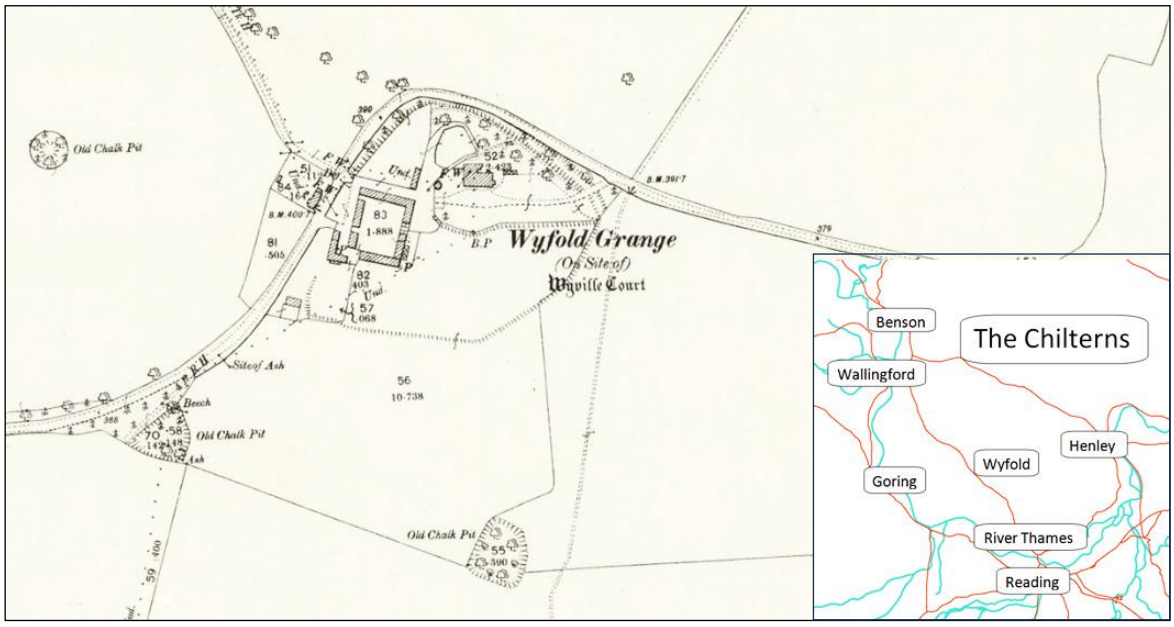

Figure 1. 1898 OS 25" map showing Wyfold Grange (also labelled Wyville Court). Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

The earthwork is shown clearly on the 1898 OS 25" map (Figure 1) demonstrating the bank and ditch on the northern half but less prominent ridge to the south. Most of the southern part of the western side has been obliterated by (possibly Victorian) development of the stables buildings. High resolution Lidar DTM data has kindly been supplied by the Chilterns Conservation Board "Beacons of the Past" project and is shown in Figure 2 (LRM visualisation by the author). This shows that most of the features shown on the 1898 map are still apparent with the exception of the northerly up-turn of the bank in the southwest corner.

Figure 2. Lidar image of Wyfold Grange showing location of excavation trenches

The aims of the present work were therefore to ascertain whether the southern half of the earthwork was the remnants of a continuation of the bank and ditch structure to form a complete enclosure, to determine the profile of the original bank and ditch and to seek for any datable material to indicate the time of construction.

1.2 Previous Archaeological Study

Despite the abundant historic record and the clear visibility of the earthwork from the road there has been very little previous archaeological study of Wyfold Grange. The Historic England record (Hob Uid: 241901) states *"On site of Wyfold or Wyville Court, moated manor house (14thc or earlier), moat? (rems. of)"* and *"There are remains of an earthwork on the NE and NW sides of the house, running alongside the modern road. It can be traced as a scarp around the SE and S sides. To the W. are farm buildings, and the course is here obliterated."* and an additional comment: *"It is not a moat, if Wyfold Court was once a hunting lodge it may have supported a pale."*

The suggestion of it being a moat can be dismissed immediately as impractical as there is a fall of approximately 6m north to south across the earthwork, and also there is no spring or other water source to feed a moat. The suggestion of it being a pale can also be rejected as the ditch is outside of the bank which would not serve to contain deer.

The Berkshire Archaeological Society visited Wyfold Grange in 1895 (Reading Mercury of 5 October 1895). The report claims "Wyfold Grange owes its interest to the fact it stands on the site of an old British and Roman circular camp, the vallum and agger of which are still to be traced in the grounds."

In 2005 SOAG undertook a short desk and landscape study (Preece, 2005) which stated "The earthwork may be Iron Age in date, or it could possibly represent later defensive works. The former seems more likely."

Likewise, the first Lord Wyfold, says *"The house is built in a prehistoric fort"* (Wyfold, 1923).

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 (Southern, 2006). This has provided much useful background information but the fieldwork did not extend to the Grange site itself.

2. FIELDWORK

Two trenches (shown in Figure 2) were dug across the earthwork. Trench 1 was located to the north where the remaining profile of the bank and ditch was most prominent, allowing for a best estimate of the original profile. It was also hoped to recover datable material from the base of the bank.

Trench 2 was located opposite Trench 1 on the southern side primarily to ascertain if there had been a ditch there and if the present slight rise in the ground represented the levelled out remains of a former bank. Here also it was also hoped to recover datable material from the excavation.

Prior to excavation core samples were extracted at a few key locations to determine from the geology the likely position and depth of underground features, in particular ditches.

2.1 Coring programme

(with contributions by Tom Walker)

A 25mm diameter hand auger (1m long with extension bars) and mallet were used, both prior to and during the excavations with four purposes:

- to understand the undisturbed base geology in the vicinity of the earthwork, in comparison with the British Geological Society (BGS) data
- to determine in advance of excavation the nature of deposits and the likely depths of changes down to natural levels
- to confirm, at various points, that natural levels have been reached in excavations (reported in Trench 1 and Trench 2 sections below)
- to determine if the ditch along the southern boundary continued along the expected line beyond the position of Trench 2

20 core samples were taken in the survey, the locations of some being illustrated in Figure 3, with labels of the form WGxx

2.1.1 Base Geology

According to BGS, the site lies on a superficial layer of clay-with-flints over a white chalk bedrock. A coring programme was undertaken and is described more fully in our report *Landscape Archaeology at Wyfold*. From this it appears that the superficial geology over much of the site 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 at the south boundary of the site) which in turn overlies a red Thames gravel layer (at a depth of approximately 0.8m). Table 1 shows a typical core sample record (WG03 for undisturbed soils near Trench 2).

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	moist
52-82	clay	nil	7.5YR 4/6	red	sharp	
82-150	clayey sand	5%	2.5YR 4/6	red		distinctly sandy and, to the eye, redder than the overlying sediment; this horizon not reached in WG02; probably the natural

Table 1. Auger Survey Record WG03 at SU 68869 81573

Numerous other core samples were taken across the site including some outside of the enclosure (some described below, some in our landscape archaeology report and some in our post-medieval report as appropriate) but the chalk bedrock was not reached in any of these. Therefore, the Thames Gravel layer with undetermined depth is referred to as "the natural" in this report.

2.1.2 Location of the Southern Ditch

At the chosen location of Trench 2 the ditch was estimated to be about 1m north of the gate in the boundary fence. Coring at the chosen location only reached a depth of 100cm where stones prevented deeper coring. However, 30m to the west coring was successful to 270cm, with very wet sediment at the lowest level above the natural, consistent with this being the ditch. Table 2 shows a core sample record from this position (WG17).

Depth (cm.)	Texture	Stoniness	Munsell colour	Colour description	Horizon boundary	Comments
0-30	topsoil silt	nil	7.5YR 3/2	dark brown		
30-68	sandy clay	5%	5YR 5/6	yellowish red	clear	rounded stones to 2cm
68-206	sandy clay	<2%	5YR 4/6	yellowish red	sharp	
206-225	sandy clay	<2%	10YR 4/6	dark yellowish	sharp	grey-looking sediment
225-250	clayey sand	nil	7.5YR 4/4	brown	sharp	very wet – if cleared
250-270	sandy clay	nil	2.5YR 4/6	red	very sharp	natural; some small stones
	COMMENT					
	The natural is much deeper than elsewhere, suggesting that this may be in the lowest part of the ditch; the very wet much more sandy horizon at 225-250 supports this.					

Table 2. Auger Survey Record WG17 at SU 68834 81572 (near Trench 2)

This clearly indicates a very different subsoil structure to WG03 (undisturbed soils) and suggests that the ground where the ditch was expected had indeed been disturbed. This provided confidence that Trench 2 should proceed and the ditch exposed.

For Trench 1 a core sample was taken to indicate the likely extent of excavation required to fully expose the ditch which was partially filled with loose peaty material and accumulated detritus. Table 3 show the record indicating at least 80cm of this loose backfill.

Depth (cm.)	Texture	Stoniness	Munsell colour	Colour description	Horizon boundary	Comments
0-29	peaty	nil	10YR 3/2	very dark greyish-brown		very dry humic peat
29-80	peaty	nil	10YR 3/3	dark brown	sharp	slightly damp humic peat
80-98	silt	<5%	7.5YR ¾	dark brown	sharp	silty with stones up to 2cm

Table 3. Auger Survey Record WG01 at SU 68837 81738 (near Trench 1)

2.1.3 Line of Southern Ditch

In addition to core samples nos. WG02, WG03 and WG04, located close to Trench 2 shown below, further core samples were taken along the line of the ditch suggested by Lidar (i.e. the line of the present boundary) to the west of Trench 2. As with samples WG02, WG03 and WG04 these were taken along transects orthogonal to the expected line i.e. on the line 5m north of it and 10m north of it. These transects were 30m

(samples WG15, WG16 and WG17) and 55m (samples WG18, WH19 and WG20) west of Trench 2 as shown in Figure 3. As expected, the 30m transect was similar but not identical to that at Trench 2 and reached the natural at approximately 2.5m depth, indicating a continuation of the ditch. However, the 55m transect (samples WG18, WG19 and WG20) reached the natural at 0.8m, 0.9m and 1.05m respectively suggesting that though sample WG20 may be on the edge of the ditch, its deepest part is probably a little further south.

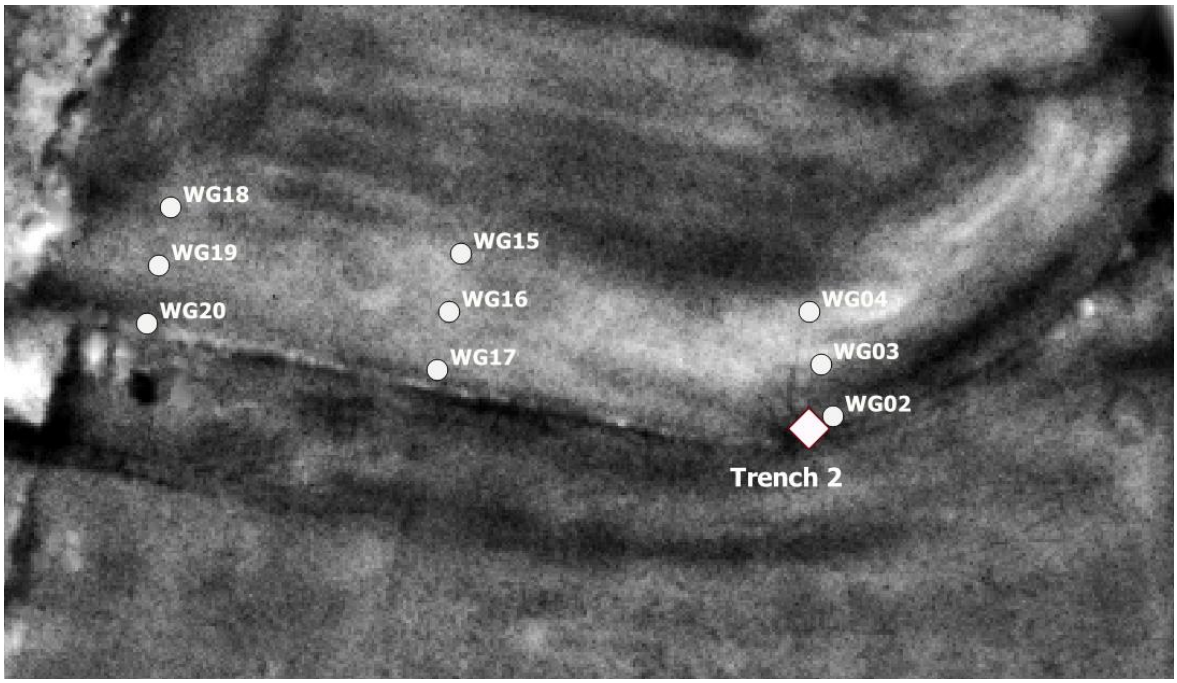

Figure 3. Core sampling points along southern boundary on Lidar image

The Lidar image (Figure 3) suggests that the remains of a former bank are now spread inside the boundary (broad white band). A resistivity survey (see our report *Post-Medieval Archaeology at Wyfold Grange*) also suggests that the ditch continues along the southern perimeter.

Further west, the land was outside the scope of the present fieldwork. However, access was kindly granted to allow visual observation of the remainder of the southern line of the supposed enclosure. It was clear from this that, as seen on the Lidar, a substantial (0.5 to 1.0m high) bank remained as far as the western most point of the earthwork as indicated on the 1898 Ordnance Survey 25" map. It was also confirmed by the present landowner that the erstwhile northerly up-turn of the bank in the southwest corner has been levelled by modern garden landscaping.

Thus, the coring work, Lidar image, resistivity survey and visual observation have confirmed the probable former existence of a bank and ditch at, and both east and west of, the location of Trench 2 though the present land boundaries may deviate marginally from the ditch at some points. The bank continues west as shown on the 1898 map and there is no reason to doubt its northerly upturn was extant in 1898.

It therefore seems reasonable to consider it likely that upturn of the bank and ditch continued north to join the extant bank and ditch 70m further north (at the present west entrance) forming a complete enclosure.

2.2 Trench 1 - The Northern Perimeter

by Bill Annan

The purpose of Trench 1 was to investigate the bank and ditch that runs along the northern boundary of Wyfold Grange. This feature is readily visible from the adjacent road but it is apparent that the ditch is partially filled with much spurious material.

Particular objectives were to determine the profile of the original ground surface and the construction of the bank on it and to excavate the ditch to reveal its original extent.

2.2.1 Methodology

The precise location (see Figure 2) of the trench was selected because it was relatively clear of the trees and bushes which generally followed the line of the earthworks. Additionally, the outline of the ditch and bank appeared particularly well defined in this area.

The excavated length of the trench (north to south) was 8.4m, with a width (east to west) of 1.5m. Excavation of the bank was stepped for safety reasons. From approximately 1.4 m below the crown, excavation was limited to a sondage along the western section, 70cm wide. The ditch area was excavated to the full trench width.

Excavation was principally by large and small hand mattocks. All spoil was collected and removed from the trench by bucket. All spoil was sieved by hand and any finds collected and recorded by context. Both trench and spoil heaps were frequently tested by metal detector.

At the end of the excavation the trench was left open at the request of the landowner: the spoil was spread over the nearby areas.

2.2.2 Results

The distribution of the contexts is as indicated on Figures 4 and 5. Figures 6 and 7 show composite photographs (produced by Richard Miller) from above the trench and of the east facing section.

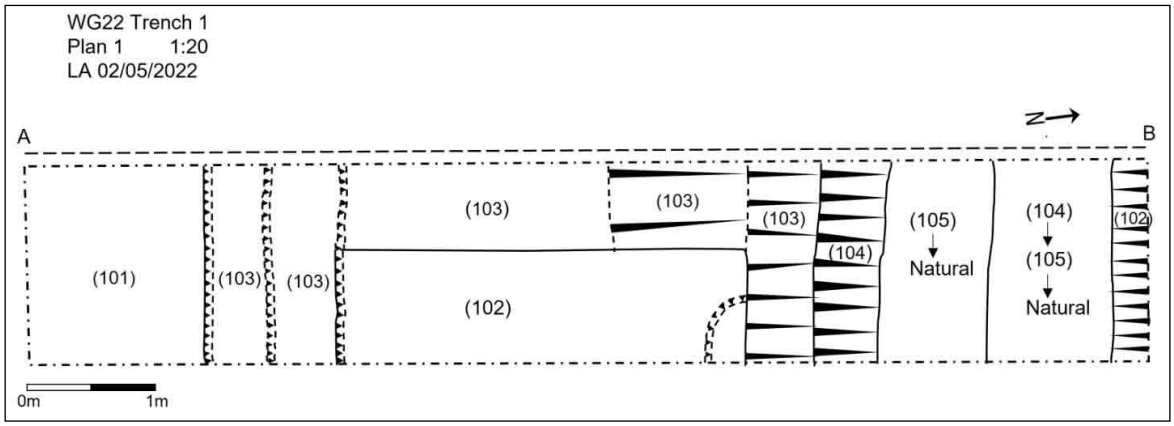

Figure 4. Plan of Trench 1 showing contexts

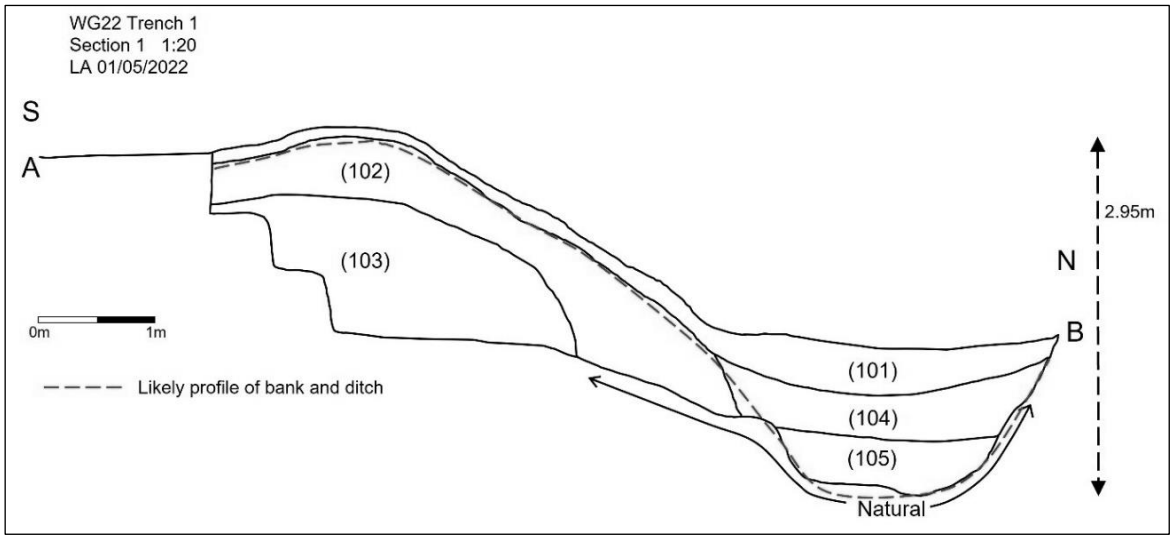

Figure 5. East facing section of Trench 1 with contexts (and likely profile of the bank and ditch).

Figure 6. Aerial composite view of Trench 1

Figure 7. Composite view of east facing section of Trench 1

Topsoil: The whole Trench was covered by a topsoil layer (context 101) of varying depth (12 cm at the crown of the bank, 40cm at the lowest point of the ditch). It comprised soft blackish organic soil mixed with leaf mould, pebbles and tree roots.

Bank: Immediately below the topsoil there was a layer of compact orange sandy gravel (Context 102) including a high pebble content and some small to medium sized flints (not knapped), with root inclusions and root disturbance. The depth of the context varied from 50cm (below the crown) to 80cm (at the base of the ditch). With depth the context became drier, with a higher incidence of gravel and sand. Context 102 is interpreted as material redeposited from the ditch to form the bank. No evidence of a palisade was found but as the trench was only 1.5m wide, it may have fallen between two post holes.

Context 102 transitioned to a very compact orange sandy clay and flints (Context 103), interpreted as the natural ground surface forming the base of the bank. This was excavated within the sondage only, to a depth of 1.1m.

Ditch: Beneath the topsoil there was an upper fill (Context 104) of dark blackish clayey soil, with pebbles and flints, 30-50 cm deep, with common root inclusions and root disturbance.

Context 104 transitioned to a lower fill (Context 105) also of blackish clay, but with significant inclusions of orangey red gravel (which coloured the layer) and flints, and rare charcoal specks. There was a deposit of larger (unknapped) flints in the central area of the ditch, immediately above the natural. Context 105 was 20-40cm in depth and was immediately above the natural orange sandy clay.

Contexts 104 and 105 are interpreted as cumulative infill of the ditch from the bank and surrounding land.

2.2.3 Small Finds

There were a small number of finds of modern or indeterminate date within the topsoil (Context 101) and the upper fill of the ditch (Context 104). These are reported in our report Post-*Medieval Archaeology at Wyfold Grange*. No bones were found in any of the contexts. Three small pieces of charcoal were found in Context 102 but, as these were near the top of the bank where there were areas of disturbance caused by tree roots raising the likelihood of intrusion, they were not considered useful for dating purposes.

The lower bank (Context 103) was bare of finds, as was the lower ditch fill, (Context 105).

There were therefore no small finds in Trench 1 which can be regarded as establishing or indicating the likely date of the earthwork.

2.2.4 Trench 1 Summary

The likely profile of the ditch is shown on Figure 5. The combined height of the ditch and bank is currently 2.95m though infill of the ditch, presumed (at least in part) to have fallen from the bank, suggest a greater height when built.

No datable finds were made in contexts relating to the construction of the bank and ditch.

2.3 Trench 2 - The Southern Perimeter

by Derek Greenwood with contributions from Tom Walker

The purpose of Trench 2 was to investigate the faint curvilinear feature visible on Lidar (see Figure 2) that runs along the southern boundary of Wyfold Grange, apparently as a continuation of the imposing ditch and embankment to the north. This faint feature eventually disappears into adjacent properties to the west but along the southern boundary it is still visible as a shallow rise (15-20 cm) in the ground level of the meadow and a slight dip (15-20 cm) further out, close to the boundary fence.

2.3.1 Methodology

Trench 2 was excavated adjacent to a gate set in the fence and provided a 10 m transverse section through the rise and dip of the feature.

The aims were to excavate down to the natural, to look for evidence of the embankment and ditch and to recover any finds or other material, in particular any that might indicate the date of the earthwork, especially any that might be present at the lower levels of the bank.

Initial excavation of Trench 2 to a width of 1.5m involved the removal of about a 20 cm depth of turf, soil and subsoil, using mattocks and shovels. This proved to be a difficult exercise as the soil was compacted, mostly clay, full of flint and therefore hard to dig. As a result, a more limited programme of excavation was agreed at this point:

- Deeper excavation would be limited to the northern and southern ends of the Trench revealing hopefully the edge of the remaining embankment layer to the north and the ditch below to the south.
- Rather than digging the full width of the Trench, further excavation would be limited to narrower sondages running along the west-facing side of the Trench.
- Sieving was ruled out due to the nature of the soil. Finds would have to be located visually and with frequent checks by metal detectorists.

2.3.2 Results

The distribution of the contexts is as indicated in Figures 8 and 9. Figures 10 and 11 show composite photographs (produced by Richard Miller) from above the trench and of the east facing section.

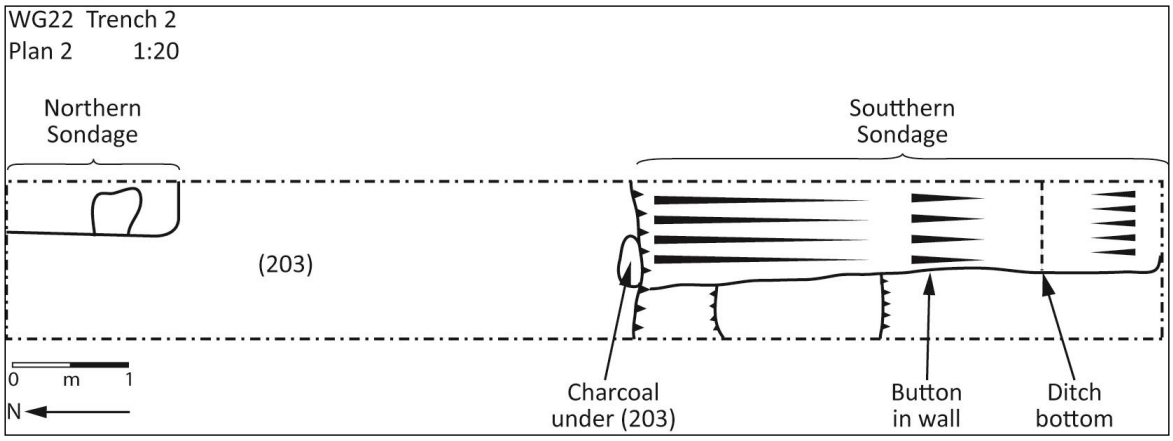

Figure8. Plan of Trench 2 showing contexts

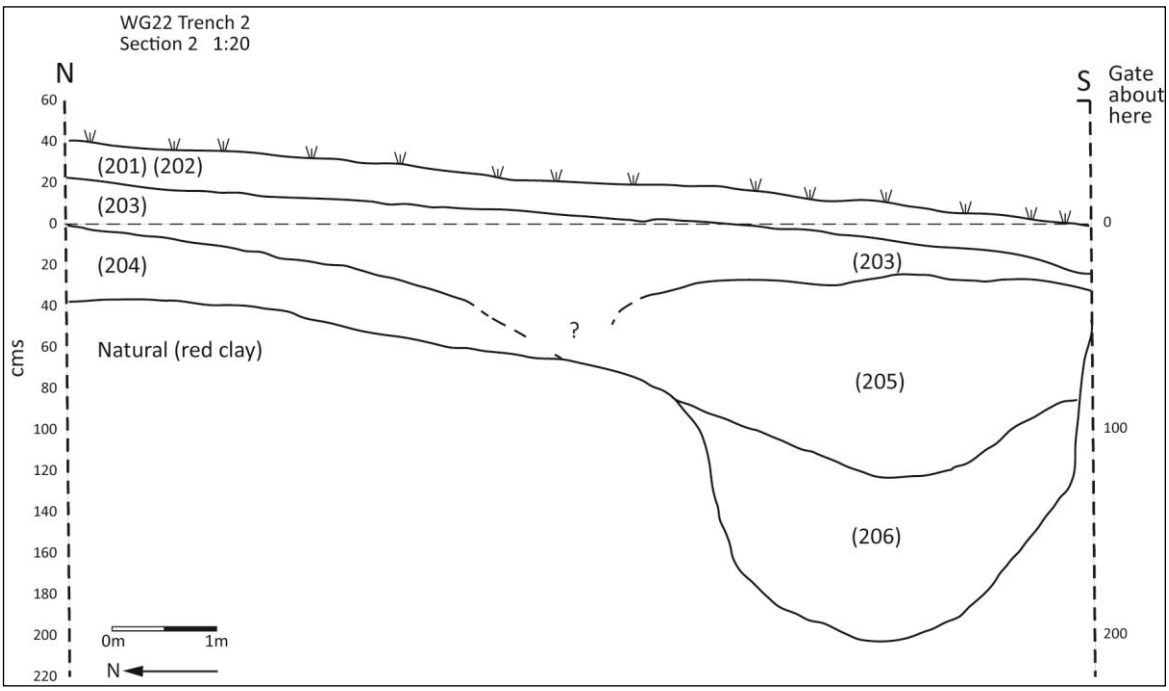

Figure 9. West facing section of Trench 2 (southern sondage) with contexts (and likely profile of the ditch).

Figure 10. Aerial composite view of Trench 2

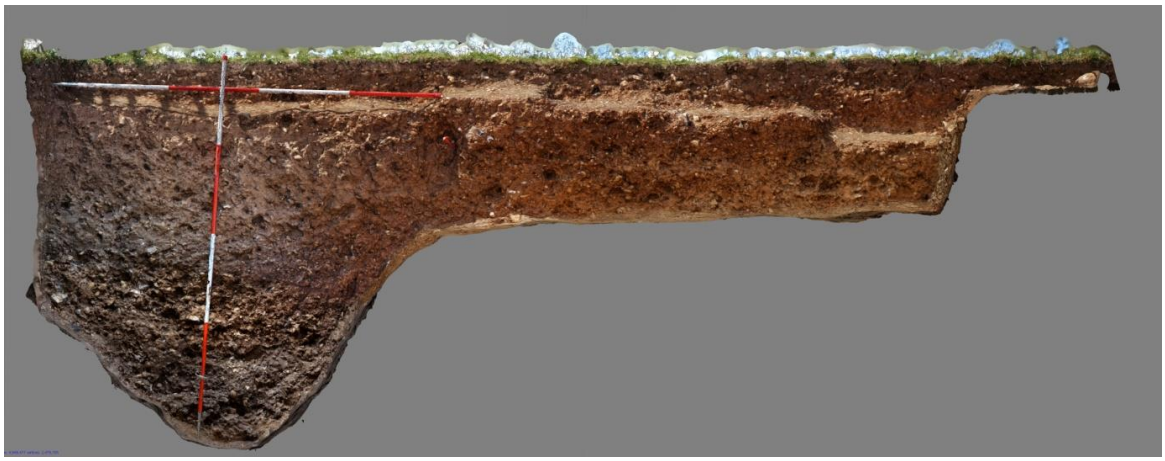

Figure 11. Composite view of east facing section of Trench 2 (southern sondage)

Excavations at the southern end of Trench 2

A sondage about 70 cm wide was put in along the last 5 m of the southern end of Trench 2, this being the minimum width to wield a mattock. Excavation down to the natural indicated very clearly that the slight depression running along the field boundary was in fact the visible fingerprint of the same large, deep ditch encircling Wyfold Grange to the north (as seen in Trench 1) and that in this southern location the ditch had cut a deep gouge into the underlying natural material, broadly in line with the findings from the auguring programme. The sondage also showed that the most southerly 50cm or so of the ditch could not be excavated as this was cut off by the boundary fence and not accessible to the project.

Immediately below the turf (Context 201) and soil (Context 202) there was a reddish clay-based layer (Context 203) containing substantial quantities of flint, pebbles, etc., quite distinct from the more recent meadow soil above. It also tapered noticeably, from about 50cm deep at the north where the shallow elevation of the embankment was visible, to 10cm or less at the extreme southern end above the ditch. This strongly supports the conclusion that this layer was the remains of the embankment thrown up around the Wyfold Grange site, which had subsequently been flattened and spread out during later occupation of the site.

The next layer down (Context 204) was a brownish soil-based layer, containing plenty of flint inclusions and turning light greyish when dry, which was found only at the northern end of the sondage furthest away from the ditch. The position of this context and its absence over the ditch provide reasonable evidence that this context was the original topsoil, covered up when the material from the ditch was thrown over it to form the embankment. This layer peters out and becomes indistinct close to the ditch, possibly suggesting some sort of platform or berm may have been provided along the ditch edge.

Within the ditch itself there were two further distinct deposits. The uppermost one (Context 205) was a lens-shaped deposit formed directly over the ditch, comprising a rich brown soil containing a number of large and medium flints. Most probably this was secondary infill, formed over an extended period from vegetation growing in the ditch and/or from soil pushed into the ditch by the movement of animals. Occasionally flints would also have made their way into this layer from the embankment above.

Below this deposit and extending right down to the natural, was a compacted mixture of brownish red clay, substantial flints and pebbles, with some very large flints at the bottom (Context206). This appears to be the primary infill into the ditch bottom, comprising the initial tumble and washout from the steep ditch walls and the exposed face of the embankment to the north.

Environmental samples were collected from the east wall of the trench in the region of the ditch. Unfortunately, no molluscs or other significant environmental evidence was found in the samples.

Excavations at the northern end of Trench 2

A sondage about 60cm wide and 1.7m long was excavated at the northernmost end of the Trench in order to provide a cross-section at a point where the shallow rise of the feature first becomes noticeable. This sondage provided supporting evidence of embankment material spread above the original soil surface as found in the southerly sondage.

Immediately below the turf and soil layers, there was a fairly even layer of flints, with a compacted reddish clay layer below containing significant flint and pebble inclusions. This material corresponded with the layer of embankment material found in the southern sondage, indicating that the embankment had, at some later period of occupation, been flattened and spread out along the southern boundary over an area 10 or more metres wide. The flint layer might have been laid down deliberately as some sort of strengthening for the embankment but could also be there as the result of natural processes occurring in the soil.

Below the red layer were layers of greyish yellow material with an overall thickness of around 40cm. These very likely correspond with the buried, “pre-embankment” topsoil layer found in the southern sondage.

The underlying solid red clay natural, identical with that found in the southern sondage, appeared at the expected depth of about 80 cm from the modern surface.

2.3.3 Finds

As anticipated, there were almost no finds evident during any part of the excavation of Trench 2. There were a few pieces of post-medieval CBM and a few bits of metal and a couple of pottery sherds in the upper contexts but nothing significant for dating purposes. The modern finds are documented in our report *Post-Medieval Archaeology at Wyfold Grange*. The very lowest context in the ditch provided no finds at all.

However, during one of the checks by metal detectorists, an 18th century metal button was found in the wall of the southern sondage in the disturbed zone where Contexts 203, 204, and 205 met (see Figure 8). It was not obvious how this button ended up there, though it is possible that it was there as a result of activities associated with the levelling of the embankment suggesting that this may have taken place in the 18th century.

Of much greater significance was the finding of a charcoal fragment in the southerly sondage of Trench 2. The fragments were lying on the surface of the buried soil (Context 204) adjacent to the northern slope of the ditch, beneath the embankment sediments (Context 203) thrown up from the ditch (see Figures 8 and 9). The location of the charcoal on the buried soil strongly suggests that it dates to or earlier than the time of the bank and ditch construction.

Following the discovery of charcoal, some embankment material was carefully cut back, revealing a small area of the original topsoil surface with several obvious charcoal fragments exposed at or within the top 5cm of the soil surface. These have been collected and one has been radiocarbon dated by the Oxford Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit (ORAU) providing a "terminus post quem" for the earthwork in the range OXA-X-3213-

7:1043+/-19 BP which has been calibrated using the Oxcal computer program (v4.4) of C. Bronk Ramsey, using the 'IntCal20' dataset (*Radiocarbon* 62 (4), 2020) to 987AD – 1030 cal AD (95.4% probability). The result is shown in Figure 12.

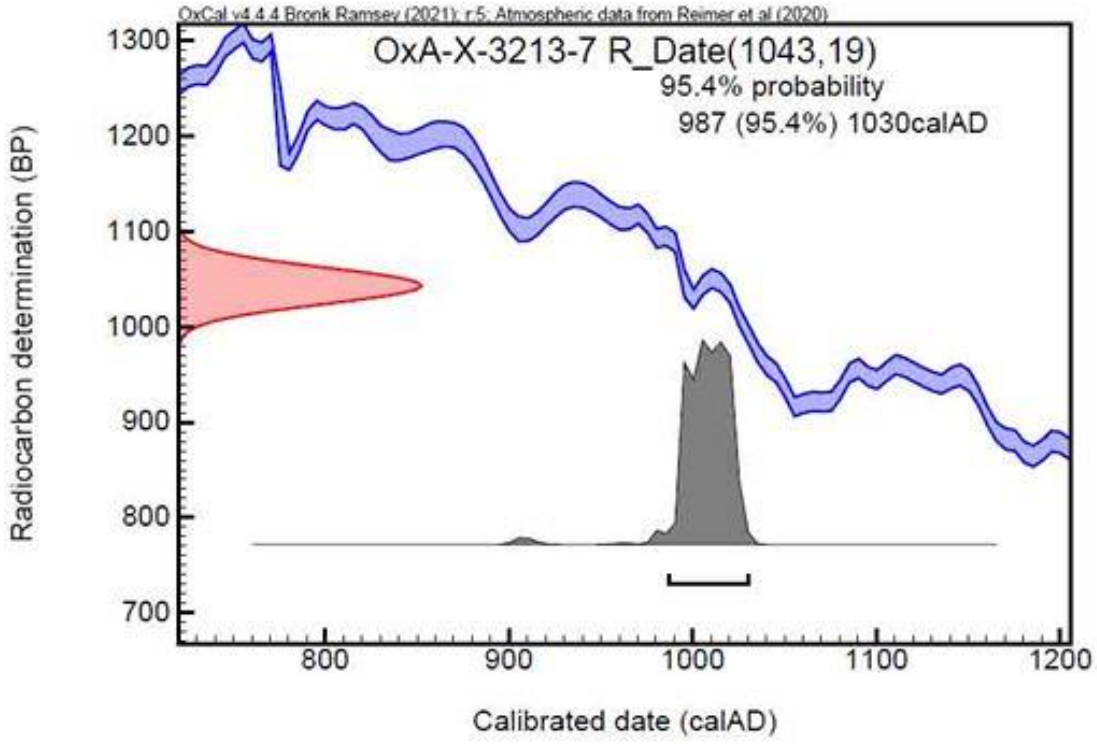

Figure 12. Radiocarbon dating of carbon sample from Trench 2. ORAU

2.3.4 Trench 2 Summary

Excavation has confirmed that the southern boundary was formed of a bank and ditch of comparable construction to that of the northern boundary.

Radiocarbon dating of a charcoal sample from a secure context has shown that construction was undertaken in the late 10th or early 11th century.

3. DISCUSSION

by Dave Carless and Elizabeth Surrey

3.1 Summary of Key Findings from Fieldwork

The excavations and coring have provided clear evidence that the earthwork was highly likely a complete enclosure with substantial bank and external V-shaped ditch of 3m or more total height. No entrances have been identified other than the two currently existing.

The southern half of the earthwork appears to have been deliberately levelled by flattening the bank, perhaps in the 18th century.

A radiocarbon dated sample of charcoal, found at the top of the old soil surface on which the bank was built, has provided a "terminus post quem" for the construction of the earthwork in the range 987AD – 1030 cal AD (95.4% probability).

3.2 Interpretations

Because of the possibility of the "old wood effect" in radiocarbon dating charcoal, it could be that the actual construction date is substantially later than the 987 to 1030 cal AD range indicated. However, as only small fragments of charcoal (i.e. no evidence of large pieces of wood) were found and as the find spot is remote from any known occupation site within the enclosure, it is considered unlikely that there is substantial "old wood effect".

Nevertheless, it is necessary to evaluate the possibility of construction during the English reigns of Anglo-Saxon, Danish or Norman monarchs, from Æthelred II to William I, or even construction as an enclosed

Cistercian Grange shortly after the time that Wyfold granted to Thame abbey c 1153. These possibilities are considered below.

Apart from the radiocarbon dated charcoal, no finds from excavation or metal detecting at the site (see our landscape archaeology and post medieval reports) have provided any dating evidence in the medieval period earlier than the late 12th century.

3.3 Probable Late Anglo-Saxon Enclosure

3.3.1 Political Context

Just two years after Æthelred II ("The Unready") first came to power (978AD) Viking raids, which had been largely dormant for many years, resumed. Following the 9th century establishment of the Kingdom of England (under the rule of the House of Wessex) and the Danelaw in the north and east there had been relative peace and a growth in prosperity. Administrative control had been revised by the establishment of the Shires and Hundreds, and by the wholesale division of large estates as attested by the profusion of grants recorded in the Anglo-Saxon charters.

Following the early death of Edgar in 975AD there was dispute, perhaps even civil war, between his two sons (half brothers) Edward and Æthelred (Stenton, 1947, p372). After a short reign Edward was murdered at Corfe and Æthelred ascended. Denmark and Norway had been united, and Christianised, under Harald "Bluetooth" Gormsson: a time of strength in Scandinavia compared to England's disarray. Hampshire, Thanet and Cheshire were raided in 980AD, Devon and Cornwall in 981 and Dorset in 982. As raids continued in the late 980s the Normans offered access to their ports to aid their northern cousins. The English sought respite. In 994AD for example, following the massive invasion of 94 ships the English bought peace for 16,000 pounds (Anglo-Saxon Chronicles). But, despite treaties and further payments, large scale raiding continued in following years.

Æthelred, in 1002AD, ordered that all Danish men in England should be killed on St Brice's day and one such massacre is recorded at St Frideswide's church in Oxford. There were further Danish raids in 1006 (the burning of Wallingford), 1009 (Sandwich), and 1013 (Gainsborough and Wallingford again) before Swein ("Forkbeard"), Harald's son, briefly took the English throne. Æthelred reigned for two more years and his son Edmund ("Ironside") briefly held the throne before Swein's son, Cnut ("The Great"), commenced the long Danish rule in 1016. Following his death in 1035AD his two sons Harald ("Harefoot") and Harthacnut disputed the crown with each eventually ruling in turn. Cnut's line of descent ended with Harthacnut's death and the house of Wessex was restored from 1042AD through to the Norman Conquest in 1066.

The Wyfold radiocarbon date provides a terminus post quem of late 10th to early 11th century, corresponding to the reigns of Æthelred II, Swein Forkbeard and Cnut.

3.3.2 Geographic Context

The extent of the royal estate of Benson in the early Saxon period (or "Bensington", apparently captured from the British in 571AD: Anglo-Saxon Chronicles), close to the initial Gewissan See of St Birinus at Dorchester from 635AD, is uncertain (VCH, XX, p8). But it is clear that by the mid Saxon period Benson had come to dominate the southern tip of Oxfordshire (VCH, XVIII, p36) and may have comprised most or even all of the four and a half Chiltern hundreds (Ewelme, Pyrton, Lewknor, Binfield and Langtree Hundreds) over which it retained hundredal jurisdiction in 1086 and into post-medieval times.

Following the establishment of Wallingford as a "Burh" c900AD, Benson's importance, from both military and administrative perspectives, declined. The estate, like most others in Oxfordshire, Berkshire and elsewhere, was neatly carved up by grants of the 9th and 10th centuries into smaller estates which became the bases of future Manors and Parishes. Many estates on both sides of the Thames owed service to Wallingford, indicated in Domesday Book.

But while Benson lost most of the land over which it had direct control, it did retain some small but notable outlying hamlets and minor landholdings in Wyfold, Rotherfield Greys, Henley, Nettlebed, Huntercombe (Nuffield), "Verneveld" (possibly in Swyncombe), Holcombe (Newington), Warborough, Shillingford, Preston Crowmarsh, Roke and Draycott. There may have been a reason that the King chose to retain these particular parcels.

In addition to their agricultural and silvicultural output, these diverse and scattered small holdings may each have offered some further economic benefit to Benson: for example, both Henley and Cromarsh Gifford have mill sites which may have been the location of the two mills held by Benson (which has only one mill site of its own) in Domesday. But it seems likely that there is a more strategic motivation for retention by Benson. Nettlebed, Nuffield and Swyncombe all lie on the route of the probable Roman road (Malpas, 1987) and later turnpike road from Benson/Wallingford to Henley. Even as late as the 1820s a perambulation of Benson's boundaries "included waste along the length of the Dorchester-Henley road" (VCH, XX, p36). Warborough and Newington lie on the Roman road and later turnpike road from the Thames crossings at Shillingford

towards Thame. En route, Simon Draper has suggested, Draycott may have been a trans-shipment point on the River Thame (Mileson and Brookes, 2021, p74). Roke provides access to this route from Benson.

Robert Peberdy (2012) has demonstrated a road from Goring, passing through Wyfold and Rotherfield Greys, towards Henley from at least the 14th century with the eastern section probably existing by the late Anglo-Saxon period. He has also argued that there must have been a road linking Wyfold to Benson (pers. comm.). We have shown in our report *Landscape Archaeology at Wyfold* that there is cartographic evidence that the road probably originally ran from Henley turning northwest at Wyfold towards Benson, with the Goring section being added later. Though there is no suggestion of a Roman road here, it clearly can be seen in terms of strategic waypoints along the route (Benson – Wyfold – Rotherfield Greys – Henley), as being comparable to the two other routes outlined above.

Perhaps also there was some need of fortification to provide security along these routes as at Wyfold. For example, the place-name "Kingsbury", at Holcombe (Gelling,1953, p117) suggests there may have been a royal fortified site on the Benson – Thame route.

3.3.3 Economic Context

That the Thames was, from early Anglo-Saxon days, a key communications route is evidenced by the early settlement pattern of the Upper Thames Valley and by clear links between the material culture of the region and that of the Lower Thames Frankish region (Mileson and Brookes, 2021, p48). The Thames could no doubt be navigated by small boats but larger vessels may have had difficulty passing the shallows in the upper reaches. Davis (1973, p262) has argued that the construction of mill weirs, predominantly in the 9th and 10th centuries, facilitated the passage of barges and thereby enhanced trade, notably to and from Oxford. But whilst improved navigation might have boosted commerce involving bulky goods it would always have been slow and unsuited to more urgent administrative and military matters, which would require roads adequate at least for horse travel if not wagons.

Like other burghs (for example Winchester) Wallingford was furnished with a street pattern and burgage plots to encourage the development of trade (Dewey and Dewey, 1977, p21) and was evidently successful, becoming Berkshire's prosperous Borough by 1086AD. A mint had been established by Athelstan's reign (925 to 940) and produced coins (silver pennies) throughout the Saxon period thereafter (Dewey and Dewey, 1977, p22). This is discussed further below.

3.3.4 Other enclosures built in England in this period

Other enclosures are recorded as probably built in England in the late 10th – early 11th centuries. Some of these are listed in Table 5 and possible interpretations are discussed below. To make a basic comparison of the shape and size of the enclosures, two metrics have been included in Table 5: (i) the enclosed area and (ii) the aspect ratio. The aspect ratio is defined as the ratio of the larger and smaller dimensions; it is always equal to or greater than one.

John Blair has identified a number of enclosures recorded in this period (Blair, 2018, Ch 11), typified by an egg-shaped ditch and bank. He suggests these were probably quasi-defensive but certainly high-status enclosures, for example Launton-en-le Morthern has been identified as a likely site for a hall of Edwin, Earl of Mercia (Castle Studies Trust 2020). They seem to have been sited as an 11th century response to a desire to monitor movements along routes: Sulgrave along the Cherwell valley, Fowlmere the London to Cambridge route, Pontefract the Great North Road along the Aire valley, etc.

Blair suggests these high status-sites were intended to be seen as a statement of power within the landscape. From Table 5 it can be seen that dimensionally Wyfold is significantly larger than these examples. This may simply be a result of the site but it also possibly indicates that it was a royal construction. It would possibly have been under the control of a powerful thegn, if not the King directly, but it is impossible to identify the individual.

Alex Langlands cites the creation of large enclosures in the late 10th to early 11th centuries, as a means to monitor, and possibly control, the movement of goods and people, and implies a commensurate amount of economic traffic (Langlands, 2013). He discusses the growth of a market-based economy from the late 10th century continuing into the 11th with an increased emphasis on regional trade in surplus commodities promoted by the development of local urban markets, and the implied increase in traffic generally across the period creating an opportunity for income by taxation (tolls) for use of the King's highway. Langlands (p 228) associates these enclosures with the requirements of the thegn to provide an element of protection to people using the road and maintenance of the road, burhs and bridges.

Three examples of enclosures in Wessex dating from the 8th to 11th century that appear to have had a role in controlling routes are discussed: Yatesbury, Trowbridge and Faccombe Netherton. At Yatesbury an enclosure of approximately 180m diameter has been identified (Reynolds, 1994 & 1995, Enc 3) as having originally sat

astride a route from Wroughton to Marlborough. At Trowbridge there was evidence of occupation from the Middle Saxon period and in the tenth century a church and graveyard together with a substantial, approximately 20m square, enclosure formed by a ditch and bank, which later became absorbed by the inner bailey of the Norman castle (Davies and Graham, 1987 and ASC). Trowbridge is located on a major route running from the SE to the crossing of the Avon at Bradford-on-Avon and a possible EW route across the upper Avon flood plain. Faccombe Netherton (Fairbrother, 1990) is a multi-phase site covering phases from the 9th to the 14th century. The site lies in a network of roads linking important Anglo-Saxon sites and, it is suggested that it may have been sited to control a route between Andover and Oxford via Hungerford and Wantage.

David Hill (1975), in considering the origin of Anglo-Saxon towns, considers the development of pre-conquest burhs, including towns and forts, ports (i.e. a market with a burh) and mints. He discusses such sites as an attempt at commercial exploitation of the large monastic and royal estates by fostering the development of (physical) markets by creating a burh and by offering inducements for its use such as improved roads and bridges, from which tolls could be collected. Two examples, Caistor and Horncastle (both in Lincolnshire), are similar in size to Wyfold and are known to have existed in the late 10th century.

Both Caistor and Horncastle were created from the ruins of Roman camps or forts and had stone walls and both had small mints active from 973AD. There are also examples of refurbished Iron Age forts as secure sanctuaries for mints during the reign of Æthelræd II in response to increased Viking raids between 980 and 1010 AD. During this time the Wilton mint moved to Old Sarum and the Ilchester mint to Cadbury (Hill p258). It has been suggested that the mint at the Iron Age fort of Cissbury originated at this time, seemingly operating in parallel with the mint at Chichester (Dolley, et.al. 1955-7) and subsequently forming the mint at Steyning in Cnut's reign. Excavation at Cadbury (Alcock 1969, 1970) showed extensive refurbishment with a mortared wall and supporting rampart, attributed to Æthelræd II. Old Sarum also shows evidence of refurbishment of the defensive bank (Montgomerie, 1974) but is tentatively dated to the early 10th century based on a terminus post quem find of a brooch.

The known record of Wallingford mint coins shown in Table 4 suggests a sharp reduction in production at Wallingford during the reign of Æthelræd II (Christie, 2013). Following the attack on Wallingford by Vikings 1006AD, is it possible that the Wallingford mint was moved to Wyfold? The Caistor and Horncastle evidence would then suggest the possibility that Wyfold could also be Iron Age or Roman in origin but refurbished around 1000AD, however no archaeological evidence has been found to support that.

	Æthelræd II				**Cnut**		
	991-997	997-1003	1003-1009	1009-1017	1017-1023	1023-1029	1029-1036
No. coins	37	28	7	4	16	16	20

Table 4 Known Coins from the Wallingford Mint in the Reigns of Æthelræd II and Cnut

Draper (2012) has identified a number of late Anglo-Saxon enclosed settlements in Wiltshire. Among these Bremhill, Codford St. Peter, Saintbury, Yatesbury (Enclosure 2) and Burbage are included in Table 5. All of Draper's example enclosures contain churches with evidence of late Anglo-Saxon masonry and some contain later manors. The foundings of these sites are attributed to high status individuals acquiring land following the fragmentation of larger royal estates and the gifting of land to a new aristocracy and religious houses.

In *Rural Settlements and Society in Anglo-Saxon England* (2012), Helen Hamerow, discusses the evolution of several mid Anglo-Saxon enclosed settlements into the late Anglo-Saxon period and stresses the variation of layout over time. Bramford (Suffolk) in Table 5 is such an example. Not all of these settlements display an enclosing ditch and bank, but Springfield Lyons, (Tyler and Major, 2005) is an example, where a Bronze age ring ditched enclosure has been successively overlain by an early Anglo-Saxon cemetery and a late Anglo-Saxon domestic settlement, which appears to contain most of the accoutrements of a high status enclosure – three large halls, a towered building and a kitchen have been identified, together with a possible post-mill.

3.3.5 Comparison of Anglo-Saxon Enclosures *

Location (Ref)	Main dimensions excl bank & ditch (m)	Ditch width/ depth (m)*	Approximate Date & Evidence	Aspect Ratio	Area (ha.)	Comments
Goltho Period 5 (Blair), (Beresford)	81x98	5/2	950-1070 LAS pottery, coin Cnut, iron ware	1.2	0.62	Size est. from Beresford p72. Pre-dates Norman motte & bailey. Multi-phase site
Sulgrave (Blair)	84x124	4/-	C11th	1.5	0.82	Size est. from Blair fig 144. Shape assumed from road
Fowlmere N (Blair)	100x132	5/6	After 1000AD LAS pottery	1.3	1.04	Size est. from Blair fig 145. Curving road over major ditch
Fowlmere S (Blair)	67x92	~10/-	-	1.4	0.48	Size est. from Blair fig 145
Castle Cary (Blair)	89x111	~10/-	-	1.2	0.78	Size est. from Blair fig 146
Pontefract (Blair)	89x126	~6/-	1000-1050 A-N pottery	1.4	0.88	Size est. from Blair fig 146. Multi-phase site
Saintbury (Blair)	76x122	~6/-	-	1.6	0.73	Size est. from Blair fig 146. Multi-phase site
Laughton (Blair)	90x125	-/-		1.4	0.88	
Erringham (Holden), (Blair)	~72 (~86)	~5/2	After 1000AD Coin Æthelred II, A-N pottery	1.0	0.41	Size est. from Holden fig 7 & 13. Multi-phase site. Assumed circular based on palisade post holes
Eynsford (Horsman)	57x89	5/2.5	Early C11th Pottery & stratigraphy	1.6	0.40	Size est. from Horsman fig7
Stafford (Blair)	~64x70	-/-	After 1000AD LAS pottery	1.2	0.35	Size est. from Blair fig 143 & 100
Faccombe (Fairbrother)	~61x88	-/-	980-1070 Penny Æthelred II, Normandy penny 1040-50	1.4	0.54	Size est. from Fairbrother fig 3.5 Multiphase site
Trowbridge (Davies & Graham)	~58x68	-/-	Mid-late C10th	1.2	0.39	Size est. from Davies & Graham fig 1 p2 Multiphase site
Yatesbury (3) (Reynolds 1994, 1995)	~183x183	-/-	Possibly late Roman to Mid A-S, pottery sherds	1.0	2.63	Size est. from Reynolds (1995) fig 2 Assumed circular Multi-phase site
Caistor (Hill)	~174x272	-/-	LAS Mint 973AD	1.6	3.72	Re-used walled Roman site Hill

Location (Ref)	Main dimensions excl bank & ditch (m)	Ditch width/ depth (m)*	Approximate Date & Evidence	Aspect Ratio	Area (ha.)	Comments
Horncastle (Hill)	~116x174	-/-	LAS Mint 973AD	1.5	2.02	Re-used walled Roman site. Rectangular Hill
Bremhill (Draper)	~198x216	-/-	LAS C10th Church masonry	1.1	3.36	Size est. from Draper fig 6
Codford St. Peter	~202x232	-/-	LAS Cross shaft	1.1	3.68	Size est. from Draper fig 7
Yatesbury (2) (Reynolds, Draper)	~110x146	-/-	LAS Church	1.3	1.61	Size est. from Draper fig 8. Sub-rectangular
Burbage (Draper)	~97x200	-/-	LAS recorded 961AD	2.1	1.94	Size est. from Draper fig 9. Sub-rectangular
Bramford (Hamerow)	~106x116	~2.8/1.4	MAS-LAS Sceattas & stratigraphy	1.1	0.97	Size est. from Caruth fig 103 Multi-phase site
Wyfold	177x210	~5/2	(987 – 1030) AD probability 95.4% Charcoal ^{14}C	1.2	2.92	Size est. from Lidar, NLS map and garden observation

*Table 5 Comparison of A-S Enclosures**

*(*NB Where only one set of dimensions is given it was not possible to determine inner dimensions from the figures)*

3.4 Possible Scanic Fort

As, for much of the period under consideration, England was under Danish rule it is necessary to consider that in the last quarter of the C10th century a number of ring fortresses were constructed in Denmark. With a typical diameter above 100m, seven are known: Aggersborg (240m), Borgeby (150m), Borrering (145m), Trelleborg (136m), Frykat, Nonnebakken, Borgring (120m). Most are believed to have been built by Harald Bluetooth except Nonnebaken which was built by his son, Swein Forkbeard. There is an eighth possible candidate at Hellsingborg (Weidhagen-Hallerdt, 2009).

All are characterised by the following features:

- Monumental dimensions.
- An exactly circular geometry
- Four entrances, one at each point of the compass.
- Axial streets in association with the entrances.
- V-shaped ditches, placed a little way outside the rampart.
- Large hall buildings, forming symmetrically placed rectangles in each quarter of the fortress.
- The rampart is constructed of earth with an inner wooden framework and a timber-clad facade with inclined timbers (a so-called trelle or escarp) and can be 10m thick.

It is clear that the Wyfold enclosure does not conform to most of these features, and there are no other clear examples of Scanic style fort constructions in England so the possibility of Scanic influence can be considered highly unlikely.

3.5 Possible Late Saxon or Early Norman ringwork or bailey construction

The first motte and bailey castles in England were built in the reign of Edward ("The Confessor"). Due to his 24 year exile in Normandy, King Edward would have been well aware of Norman power architecture, and he invited several Norman knights to England to control some of the more difficult parts of the country, such as the Welsh Marches and the West Country (Crane, 2016). One such example is Richard's Castle on the Herefordshire/Shropshire border (HE 1011020). Built around 1050, the bailey is an irregular oval shape approximately 85m by 60m with an enclosing ditch (that includes the motte) of 6m depth and varying width around 20m. Another is Clavering (HE1011779) where the earthwork is roughly rectangular of dimensions 100mx150m surrounded by a ditch of 26m width and 5m deep along the NW side but approximately 8m wide on the other three sides.

Following the Conquest, a number of ringwork (or enclosure) defensive works were rapidly built. Their form was variable, often depending upon local topology. Sometimes these used existing earthworks as at Neroche (HE190295) and could be modified over a period of time to include a motte and additional baileys. Neroche has a multiphase development but in general banks were 0.5-4m high and ditches 0.5-0.7m deep and rectilinear in shape. A later motte and bailey was built in the late 11th century. Similarly, Ludgershall (HE1009912) may have been built on an Iron Age enclosure. This monument is unusual in having very broad banks surrounding two contiguous enclosures. Oakham castle (HE1010702) has a motte 6m high inside a 8-10m wide ditch all surrounded by a square bailey of 140m dimensions. William's Hill (HE1004907) a slightly later example at Middleham, is an oval earthwork of 70mx55m dimensions surrounded by a bank and outer ditch of width 5m.

There seems to be little conformity in the sizes and shapes of early Norman fortifications, except to note the use of wide ditches in general. Whilst the possibility of construction in the Norman period cannot be excluded, there is nothing in their form which makes this more likely than Anglo-Saxon construction. Most Norman Bailey castles were furnished with mottes and built in locations which either were, or later developed into, significant towns or villages. In this context there seems to be no evident motivation for construction by the Normans.

3.6 Possible Cistercian enclosure

Wyfold was held by the Cistercian abbey at Thame from c 1153, and it is possible that the enclosure was created by the Conversi - the historical antecedents of the Cistercian Lay Brothers. The motivation may have been to control access to the pond and to create a secure storage for valuable commodities such as wool.

The Cistercians have been widely studied and a comprehensive review covering most of England is provided by Platt (1966). Moated enclosures were used but most examples are rectilinear in shape with dimensions of 40m to 70m (Figure 5 in Platt), although the encompassing enclosure at Balk appears to have dimensions of around 130m. In Leicestershire, Burton on the Wolds and Sysonby Granges (of Garendon Abbey) show rectilinear earthworks (Courtney, ,1980) Figures 3 & 4). Burton shows what seems to be an enclosing bank of around 130m length but with no ditch and Sysonby appears to have an enclosing banked boundary of dimension approximately 250m accompanied by a ditch to the east and west boundaries. In Wales, there is a considerable body of surviving evidence for enclosures of larger dimensions (Roberts 2014). Other examples include Grange Castle, Jervaulx (HERR 21549), a rectangular enclosure 60mx40m with a ditch 8m wide and 1m deep and Bockendon (HE 1448265) rectangular 66mx60m, ditch width of 3m to 10m. Finally, South Grange (HE1018328) has a large surrounding rectilinear ditch enclosing an area of 4.1ha which is ~6m wide and between 0.5m and 1m deep. Smaller ditched earthworks further subdivide this enclosure.

Non-rectilinear examples seem to be rare. One is Bennington Grange (HERR 324035) which appears to be an irregular shaped enclosure and is Sauvigniac. Newlass (HE1019343) is defined by an irregular, curvilinear stony bank but has no ditch. The majority of examples of Cistercian enclosures seem to conform to a rectilinear shape of varying sizes, sometimes accompanied by a ditch of width from ~3m to 10m. The use of curvilinear boundaries does not seem to be widespread, at least in the literature reviewed here.

Wyfold does not conform with the rectilinear morphology so prevalent in Cistercian enclosures and, with a terminus post quem more than a century earlier than ownership transferring to Thame Abbey, Cistercian construction seems highly unlikely.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Excavations of the earthwork at Wyfold Grange have shown that it is a large irregular enclosure with a substantial bank and external V-shaped ditch. Radiocarbon dating of a charcoal fragment from a secure location below the bank has shown that it was constructed in the middle of the medieval period. With a "terminus post quem" in the range 987 - 1030 cal AD a number of potential interpretations of the earthwork have been considered.

Possible construction as a Scanic fort or a Cistercian enclosure are both considered highly unlikely on morphological grounds, and the latter also on dating evidence. The possibility of construction during the early Norman period cannot be eliminated though the location and lack of evident motivation makes this unlikely.

In the political, geographic and economic contexts prevailing at Wyfold in the late Saxon period, a wide range of enclosures constructed in England have been briefly reviewed. Possible purposes, and hence motivations for the investment required for the construction of major earthworks, including administrative, military, religious and economic, have been advanced by many authors and some of the most prominent recent discussions are briefly noted above.

We suggest that Wyfold was built in a strategically important location, initially within the large regal landholding of Benson and later becoming of importance to the burh of Wallingford. That it continued to be held by Benson through the mid medieval period, and was still recorded as Ancient Royal Demesne in 1279, suggests that it offered security along one of a number of important land routes from Oxford to the river crossing and embarkation point at Henley, and thence to London.

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LANDSCAPE ARCHAEOLOGY AT WYFOLD, OXFORDSHIRE

Prepared by:

Dave Carless and Elizabeth Surrey

With Contributions from:

Lindsey Bedford, Wendy Carless, Nigel Peters, Tom Walker and Paul Whitehead

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

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 (Mileson 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.

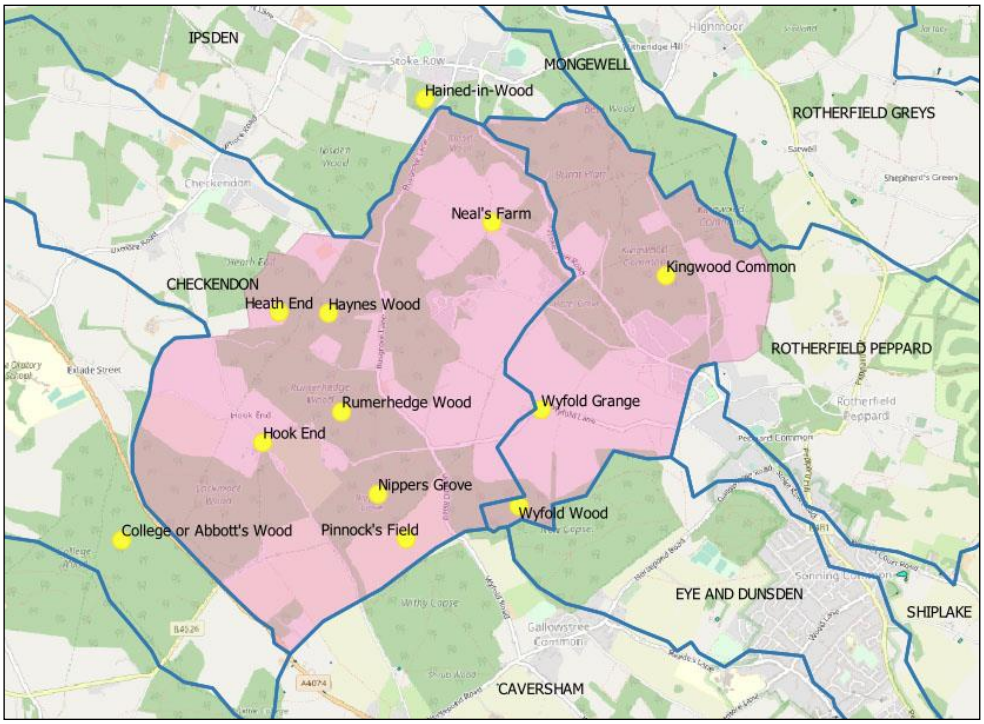

Figure 1. Possible extent of the Wyfold Estate (light shaded area) with 1851 parish boundaries over modern base map

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-Woodis 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 is "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.

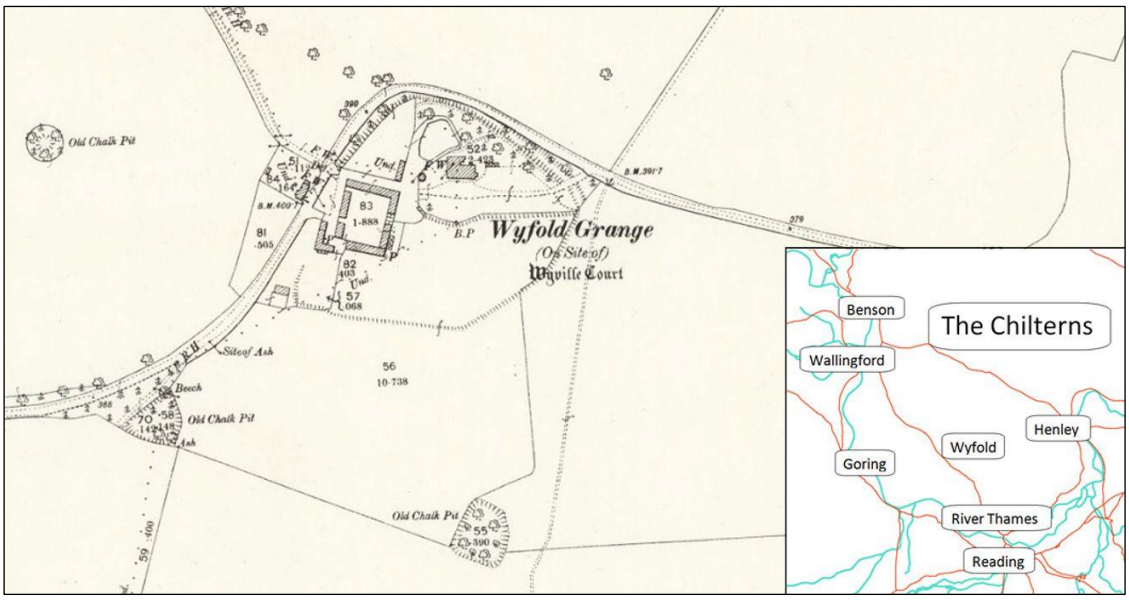

Figure 2.Wyfold Grange as shown on 25" Ordnance Survey map 1898. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

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.

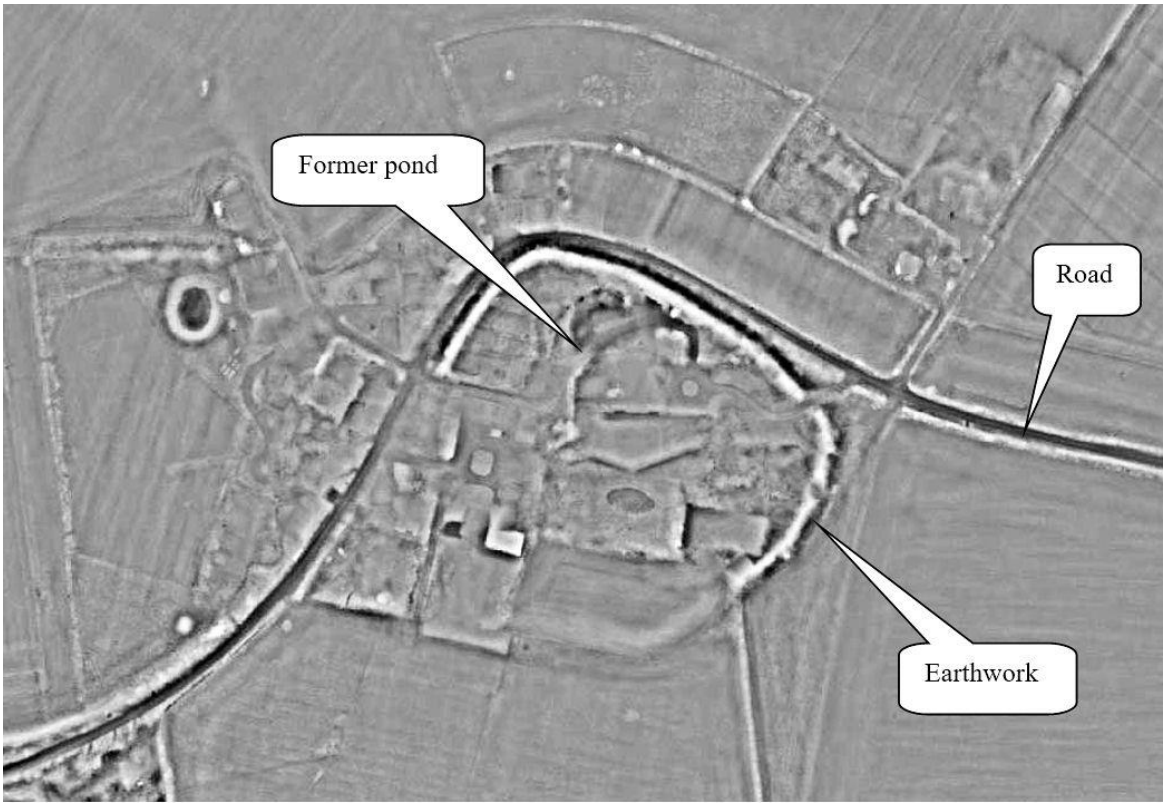

Figure 3. Lidar image of Wyfold Grange

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.

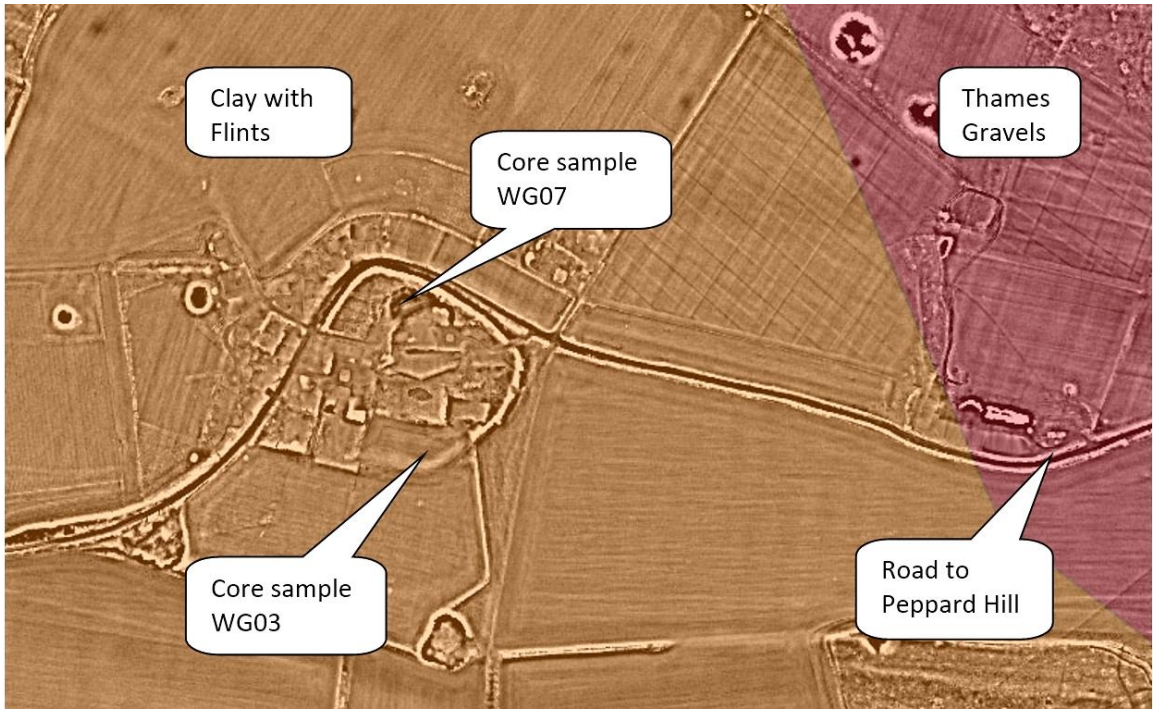

Figure 4. British Geological Survey map showing superficial deposits

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	sharp	moist
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

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.

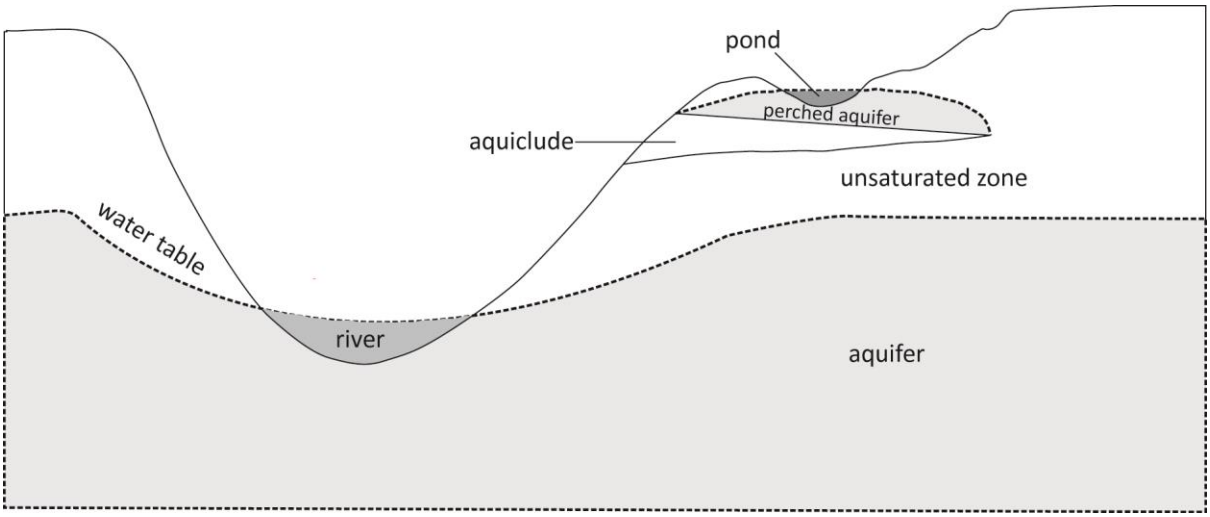

Figure 5. Illustration of a Perched Aquifer

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 1947shows 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 62years, 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 last4 years are shown in Figure 6 below.

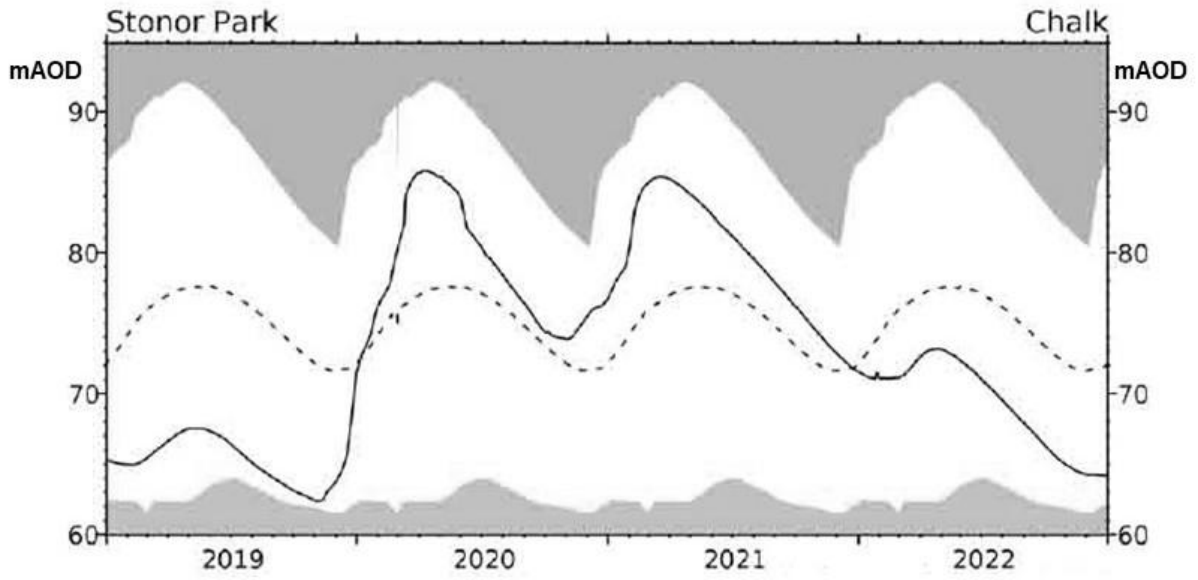

Figure 6. Hydrograph for Stonor Park 2019-2022

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/		sharp	
41-56	silt	<2%	7.5YR 3/2	dark brown	sharp	
56-74	silt	nil	10YR	dark brown		some very fine pea gravel

Depth (cm.)	Texture	Stoniness	Munsell colour	Colour description	Horizon boundary	Comments
			3/3		sharp	
74-85	sandy clay	5%	7.5YR 4/1	dark grey	very sharp	slightly larger pea gravel with occasional stone to 2cm
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		
	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.

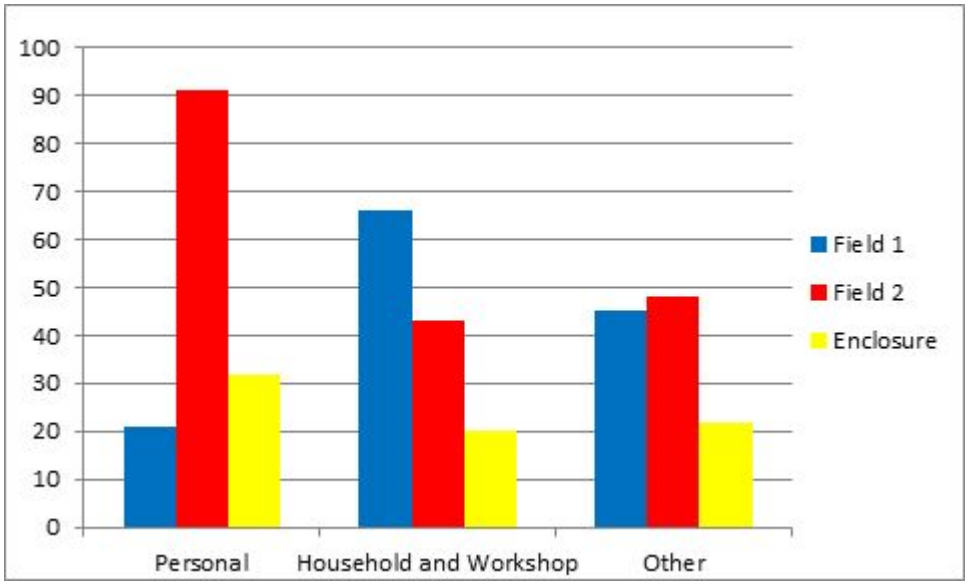

Figure 9. Comparison of find category quantities by location.

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 suggests 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.

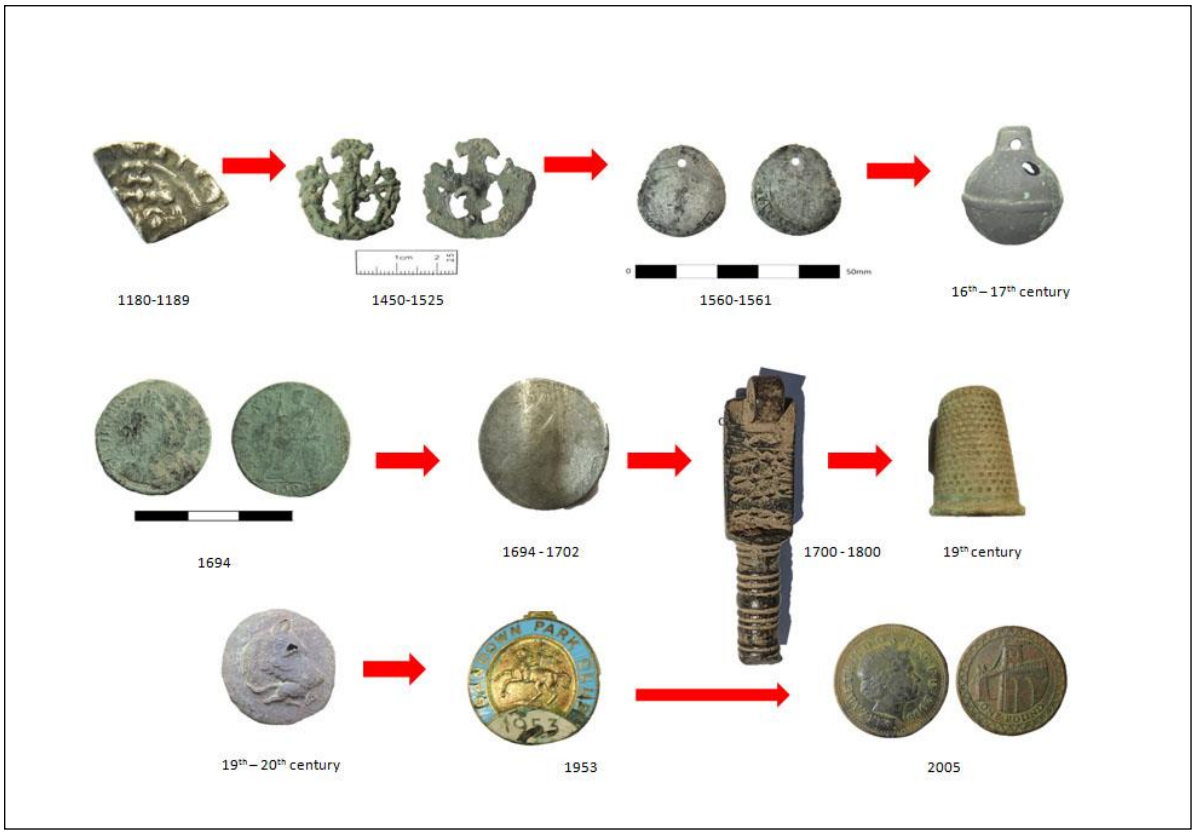

Figure 11. Time line of selected finds from all three areas of Wyfold Grange Metal detecting survey

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 crotal 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.

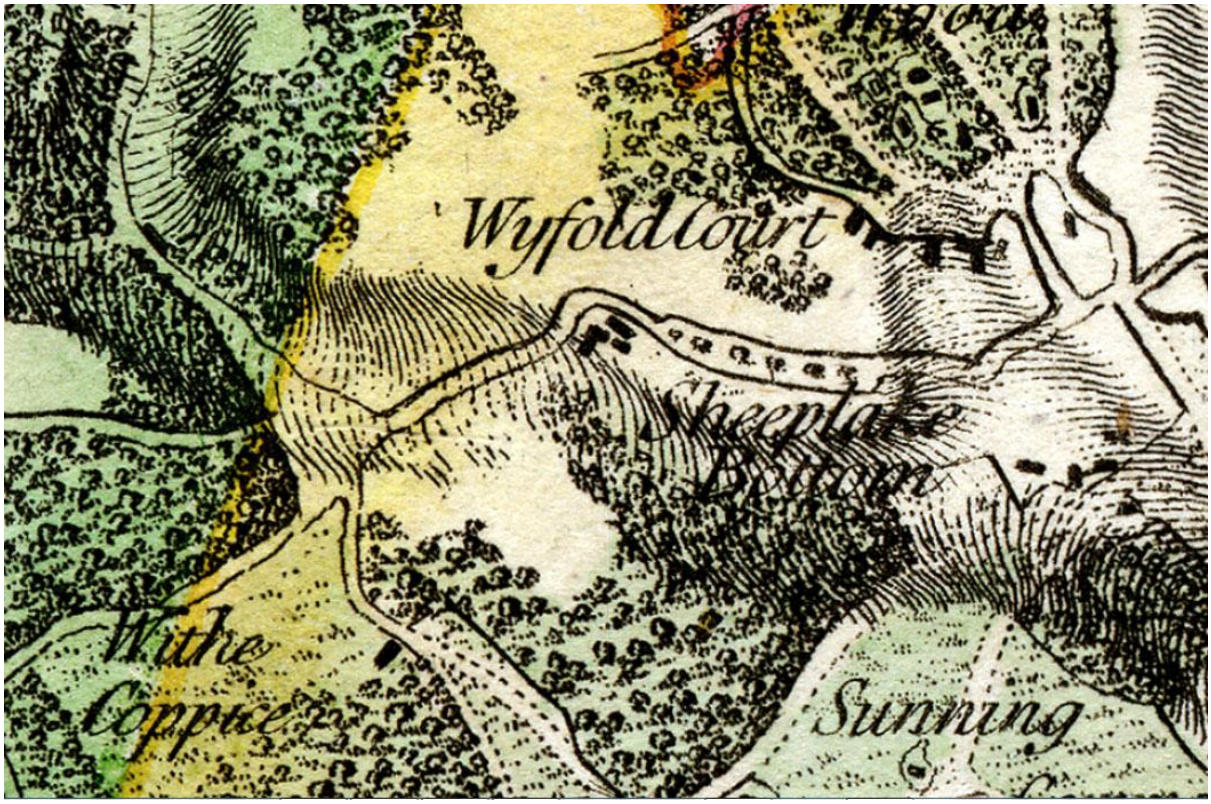

Figure 12. Section of Jeffrey's map of 1766 around Wyfold Grange

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 syvestris*), 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 (*Cedrusatlantica 'Glauca'*) and a Cedar of Lebanon (*Cedruslibani*), within the enclosure.

The location of recorded trees is shown in Figure 13.

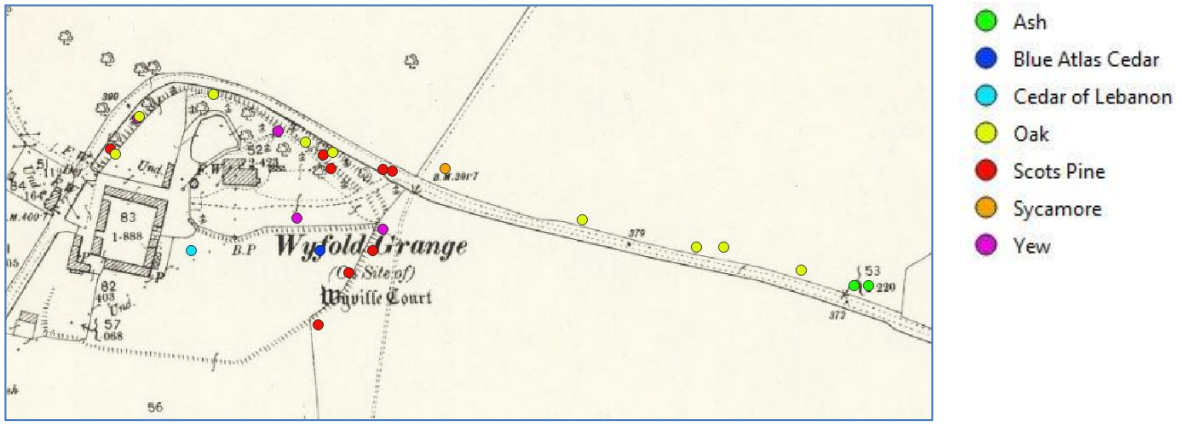

Figure 13. Location of surveyed trees. Base map reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

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

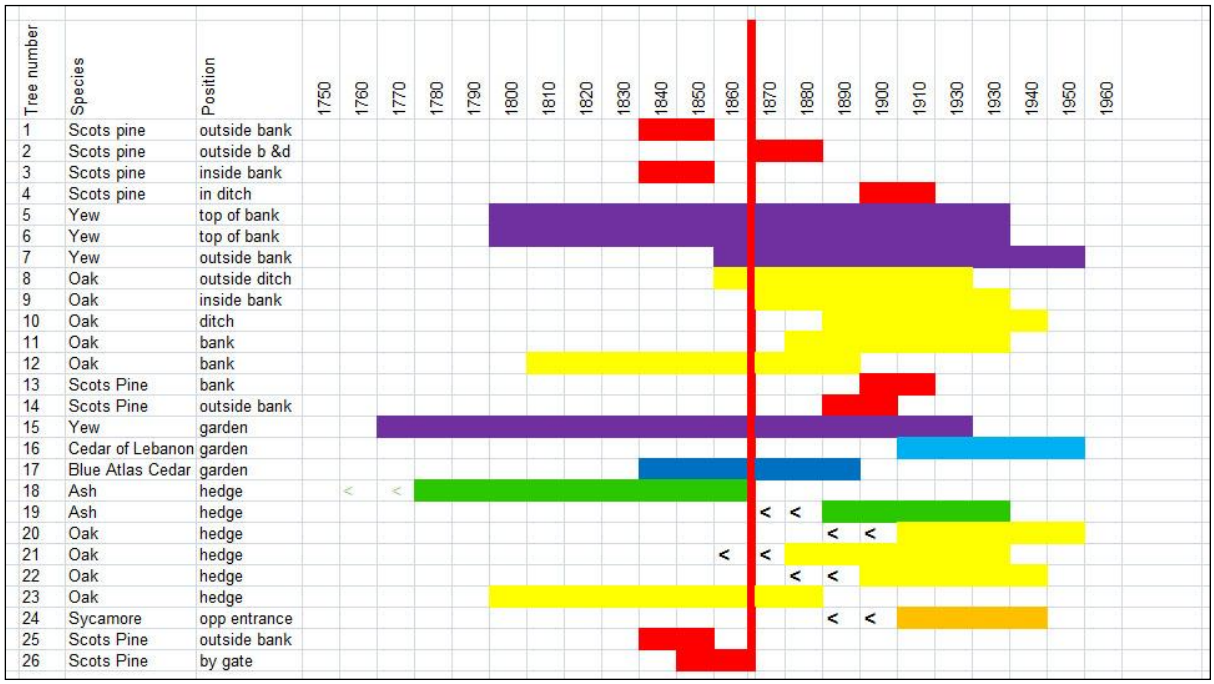

Figure 15. Estimated date range for selected trees. Vertical line is 1871 – date of construction of house. < indicates may be older.

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 Section5 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.

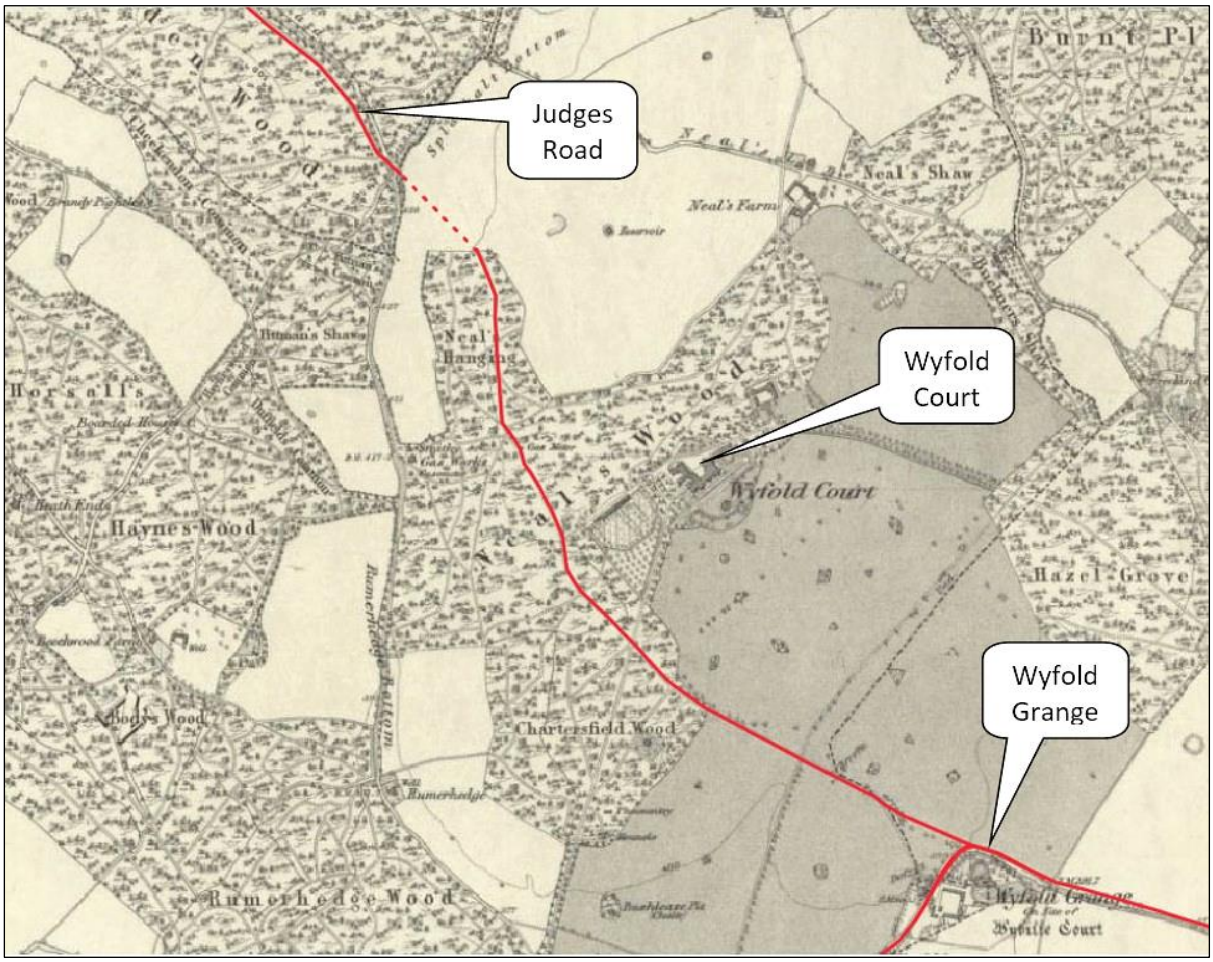

Figure 17. Possible road from Henley towards Benson via Wyfold Grange and Judge's Road over 6" Ordnance Survey map,1883. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

5.3 Droving routes in southeast England

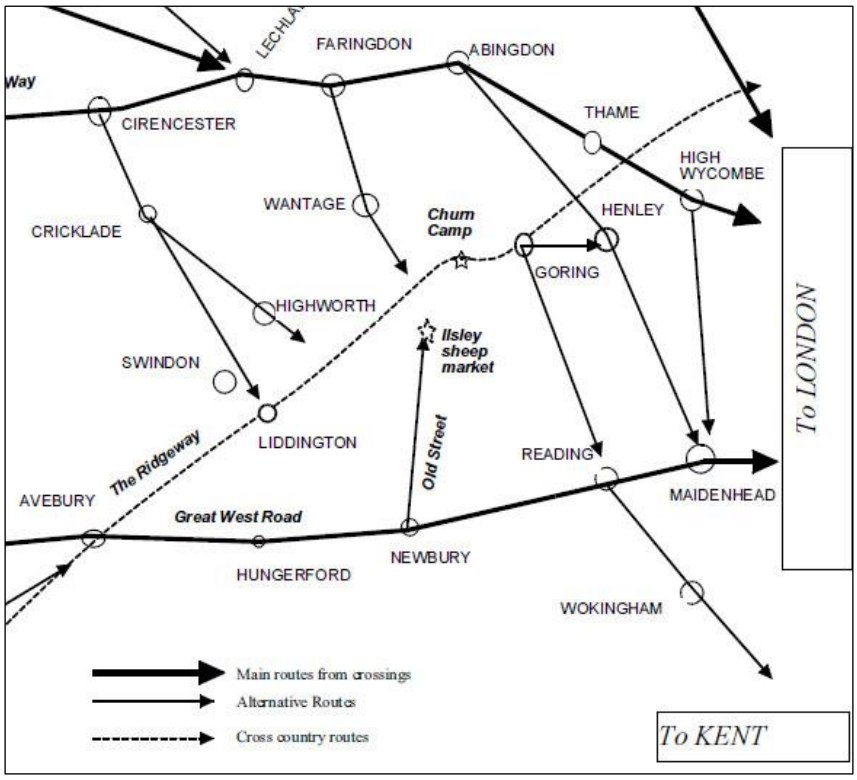

Figure 18. Droving Routes Through Berkshire – After Hammond

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 purpesture. 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 "hríðer" 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.

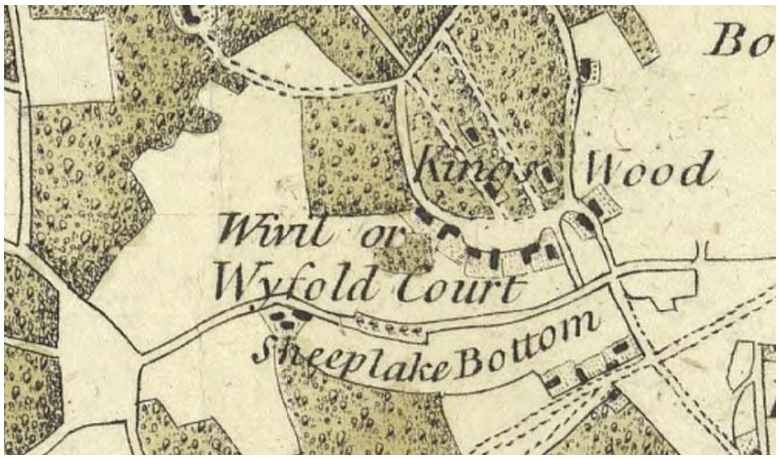

Figure 19. Andrew's and Dury's map 1774 (Andrews & Drury, 1774)

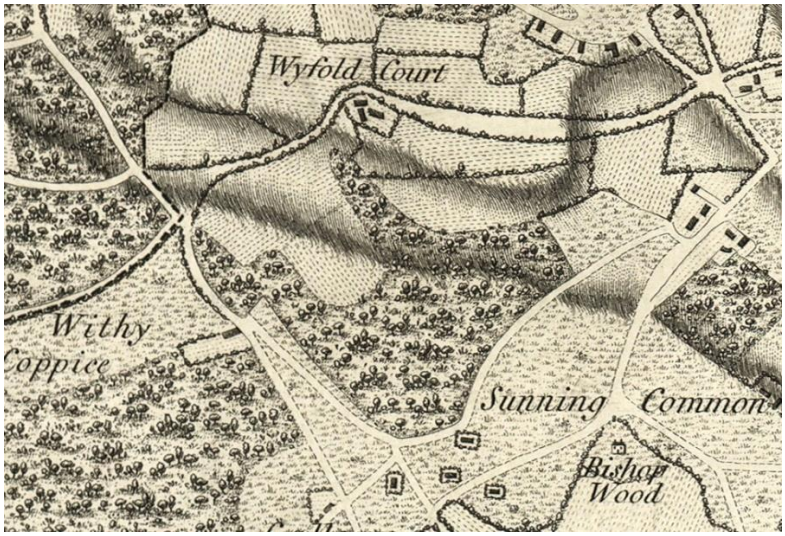

Figure 20. Davies' map 1793-4(Davies, 1793)

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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POST-MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY AT WYFOLD GRANGE, OXFORDSHIRE

Prepared by:

Dave Carless

With Contributions from:

Derek Greenwood, Nigel Peters and John Scarborough

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 Archaeological Group (SOAG) in 2022. These included, inter alia, a brief historical summary, geophysical surveys, an assessment of the house and other buildings, excavations on the lawn, an examination of water supply and excavation of a cistern and finds from an excavation on the northern perimeter of the enclosure, all relating to late medieval or later periods. We have demonstrated the veracity of a drawing of the house in 1762, held by the Bodleian Library and shown that doubts cast upon the reliability of another drawing, of 1868, may be misplaced.

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

This report focuses specifically on deskwork, surveys and excavations of Wyfold Grange relating to late-medieval and post-medieval periods undertaken by South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group (SOAG) in 2022. Two sister reports, *Landscape Archaeology at Wyfold* and *Excavations of the Earthwork at Wyfold Grange* which shows the construction to be of medieval date, cover related material and are occasionally referred to below.

1.1 Background

Wyfold Grange (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 dominated by the remains of a probably late Saxon earthwork enclosure which is roughly elliptical with a maximum diameter of about 210m. The earthworks remain prominent around the northern half but are eroded to a lower profile to the south. The general layout of the site in the context of its immediate environs is clearly shown on the 1898 Ordnance Survey 25" map, Figure 1.

The aims of the present work were to add to the known history of the site in the later medieval and post-medieval periods by geophysical surveys, excavations and deskwork.

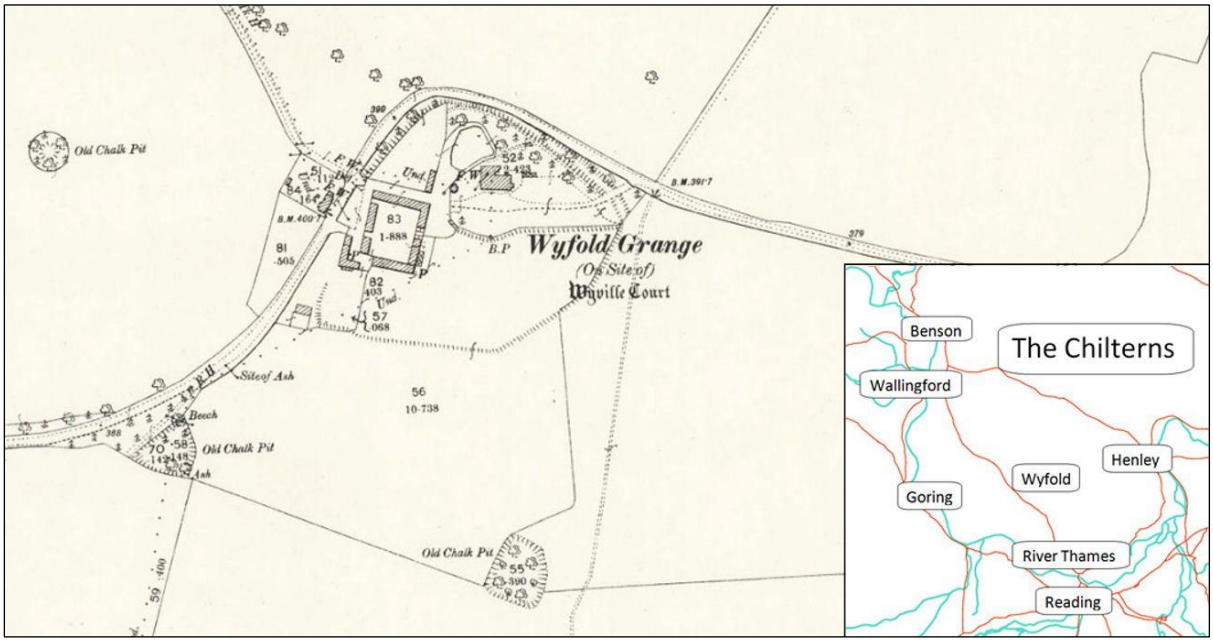

Figure 1. Wyfold Grange as shown on 25" Ordnance Survey map 1898. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

1.2 Geology

The geology of the enclosure has been investigated by taking core samples and is reported in more detail in our report *Landscape Archaeology at Wyfold*

In summary, over most of the enclosure a chalk bedrock is overlain by a superficial deposit of Thames gravel (of undetermined depth but greater than 2m measured near the southern boundary) which in turn is overlain by a further superficial layer of "clay with flints" to a depth of around 0.8m.

In the area of the former pond there is a thick deposit (greater than 3m) of impervious clays.

2. BRIEF HISTORY OF WYFOLD GRANGE

with contribution from Nigel Peters

Though not mentioned specifically in Domesday Book, it is likely that Wyfold Grange and surrounding land was part of the Royal estate of Benson (Bensington) at that time (Mileson and Brookes, 2021). Thame Abbey, belonging to the Cistercian order, was founded in 1138. By 1179 they had four granges in Oxfordshire, at Wyfold (given c 1153 by Henry II), Otteley, Stoke Talmage and Chesterton, and two others in Buckinghamshire. As a farming order, they were exempt from paying tithes and were not subject to episcopal visitation, so historical records are few, though research in 2005 by SOAG stalwart Pat Preece found some details of tenants and the working (assarting) of the woodlands (which covered most of the manor) in the 12th-

14th centuries (Preece, 2005). The extent of the estate is estimated in our report *Landscape Archaeology at Wyfold*.

Wyfold had become a manor by 1452 when it was owned by Thame Abbey (VCH XX, p 87) and farmed by tenants. The Abbey seems to have had frequent periods of debt and mismanagement. When the Abbot of Waverley visited in 1525, he found the buildings in ruins, with immense debts. He said *"Though the abbot is ignorant ..... I cannot allow this monastery..... should totter to ruin under an evil shepherd, and with an irreligious flock."* (VCH II, pp83-86). Following the Dissolution, the monastery was surrendered in 1539 and in 1546 the manor was split into two parts centred on Wyfold/Wyvil Court and Hook End farm (VCH XX, p87). The Wyfold Grange estate was sold off, partly to the Lord of the Manor of Checkendon.

It is probably around this date that the original manor house was built on a site now largely beneath the present Wyfold Grange house as evidenced by the 1841 Tithe Apportionment maps for Checkendon and Rotherfield-Peppard shown in Figures 6 and 7 and Ordnance Survey 25" map 1898 (Figure 1).

In 1870 Edward Hermon, MP for Preston, and cotton magnate, purchased the Wyfold/Wyvil manorial estate (House and Heritage, 2019). The old house was demolished and the present house, known as "Wyfold Grange" was built c.1871, as discussed further below. Hermon also built a much grander house, taking the name "Wyfold Court" about 1km to the northwest, completed in 1877. A grand dinner party and ball was given in February 1877 at the new Court, "*the residence of E. Hermon...the owner of the estate, who has now taken up permanent residence here... the festivities...were the first of the kind to be held there*" (Henley Advertiser, 1877).

3. GEOPHYSICAL SURVEYS

by John Scarborough

Magnetometry and resistivity surveys were undertaken over all sufficiently clear areas within the earthwork enclosure, Figure 2. The aim was to identify any underground features which might relate to former occupation or other use of the grounds of Wyfold Grange with the potential for further investigation by excavation.

Figure 2. Location of the five geophysical survey areas

3.1 Equipment

Positioning was undertaken using a Trimble 5700 GPS Base Station and Rover receivers. A permanent marker reference point was established at SU 6884481667, elevation 120m AOD (Above Ordnance Datum) and used to plot a 20m x 20m grid across the five areas (conservatory lawn, driveway, lawn, meadow and pond) to be surveyed.

Magnetometry surveys were performed with a Bartington 601-2 Gradiometer (thanks to Richard Miller).

Resistivity surveys were performed with a TR Systems Mk2 resistivity meter.

Analysis and image production was undertaken using QGIS 3.16.11, Snuffler 1.32 and TerraSurveyor Lite 3.0.37.3

Aerial photography was by DJI Air 2S drone (courtesy of Richard Miller).

3.2 Results

The survey results have been georeferenced to a drone photograph of the Grange property. These are shown in Figure 3 and Figure 4.

Figure 3. The magnetometer survey georeferenced to aerial photograph

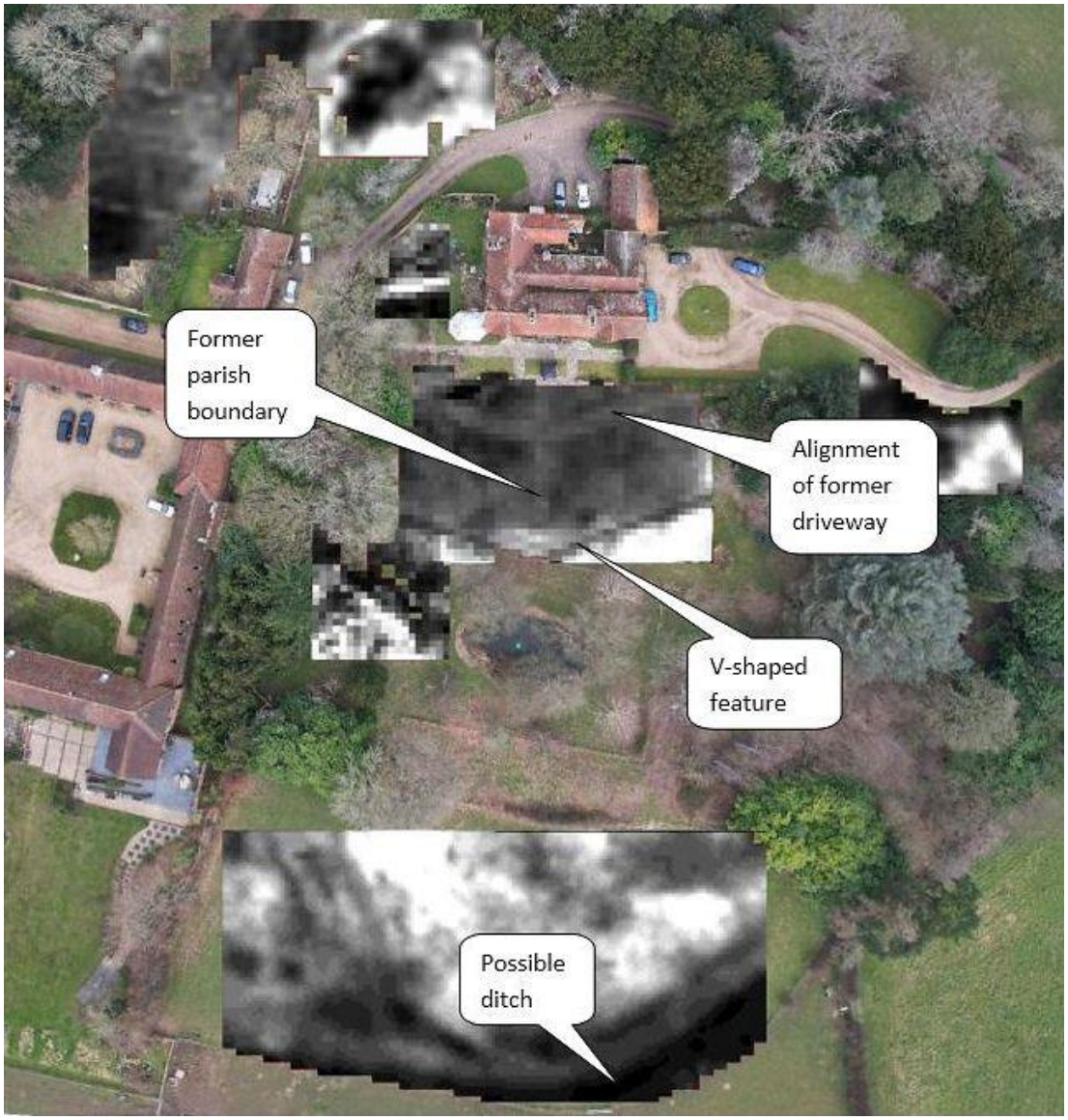

Figure 4. The resistivity survey georeferenced to aerial photograph

3.3 Discussion

Although there were broad anomalous areas in both surveys which may indicate the presence of demolition material, no clear evidence of foundations of former buildings was found. This suggests that any former foundations were either made of biodegradable materials or, if masonry, have been robbed out. The absence of any sign of the former house is consistent with the hypothesis that the new house (built in 1871 – see Section 4) was constructed on broadly the same footprint as the former.

The magnetometer survey showed two parallel lines, possibly a double track, heading south off the east driveway. As this was not clear on the resistivity survey it was not investigated further, but it is thought that this is possibly caused by sub surface vehicle ruts.

The resistivity survey showed a distinct shallow V-shaped feature to the south side of the lawn which coincided with a dip in level and possible remnant of a ditch. The line of this feature is shown on the 1898 OS map, Figure 1. This feature was subsequently excavated as Trench 3 – see Section 4.

The alignment of the former driveway south of the house as shown on the 1898 map can also be seen on the lawn. In addition, the N-S portion of the former Checkendon/Rotherfield Peppard parish boundary, which passes through the boundary post ("*B.P.*" on the map in Figure 1), is clearly visible on the resistivity image indicating that at some time this boundary must have had a substantial physical presence.

The meadow resistivity image indicates what appears to be a ditch running around the south side as a continuation of the bank and ditch enclosure earthwork to the north. This feature was subsequently excavated and is recorded in our report *Excavations of the Earthwork at Wyfold Grange*.

Both magnetometry and resistivity show the path of what could be services to the NW of the property.

4. THE LAWN EXCAVATIONS

with contribution from Derek Greenwood

4.1 Trench 3

The resistivity survey showed a distinct dark (low resistivity) shallow V-shaped feature to the south of the lawn which corresponded with a dip in level and possible remnant of a ditch. High resolution Lidar DTM data has kindly been supplied by the Chilterns Conservation Board "Beacons of the Past" project and is shown in Figure 5. This shows that most of the features shown on the 1898 map are still apparent. The resistivity image, the Lidar image and the 1898 map together with the panoramic view across the valley (now partially blocked by planting in the 1980s) suggested that this feature might have been a Ha-Ha (a ditch with a masonry wall on one side, which would keep animals out but allow uninterrupted views across the countryside) or perhaps the footings of a former wall.

The purpose of Trench 3 was to investigate this feature. On the ground, it was visible as a steep dip running in front of the Grange, dividing the slightly higher lawn around the building to the north from the lower ground to the south.

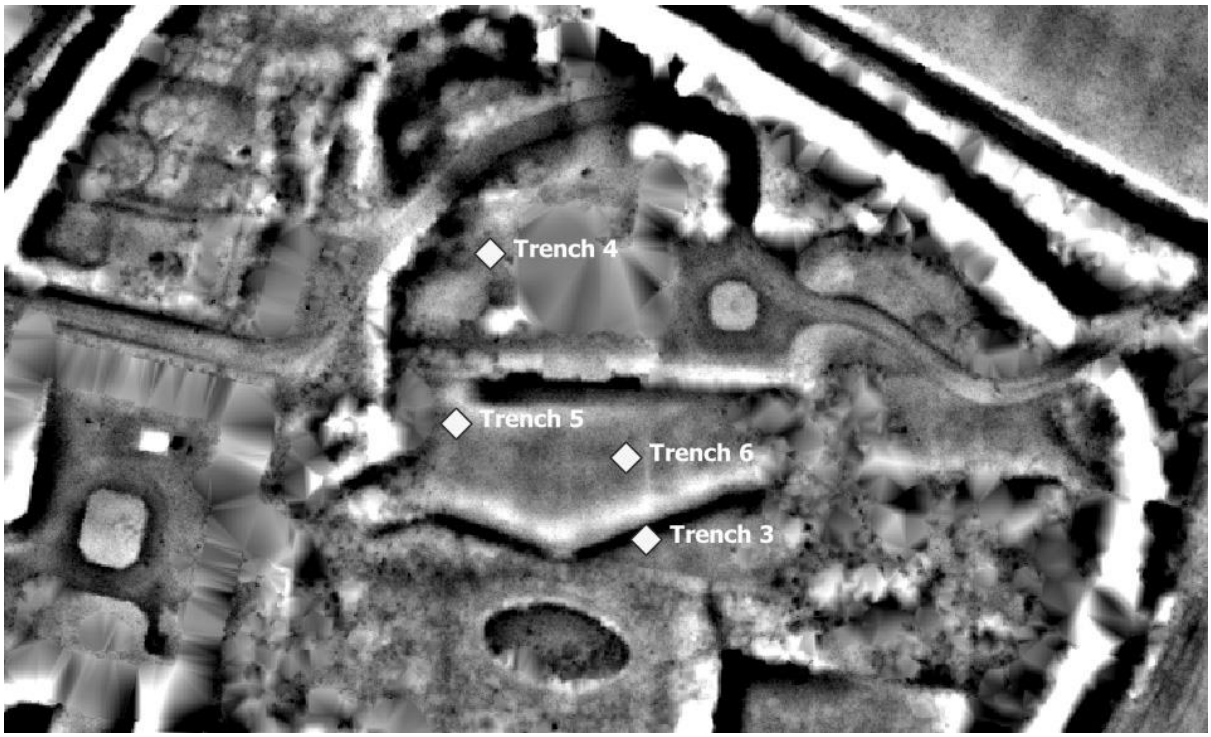

Figure 5. Lidar image of Wyfold Grange showing location of excavation trenches (LRM visualisation by the author). Lidar data courtesy of Chilterns Conservation Board "Beacons of the Past" project.

4.1.1 Methodology

Trench 3 was positioned transversely across the linear feature and dug to a depth sufficient to get down to the natural. It ran 3.4 m from the upper lawn, across the dip and out onto the lower part of the lawn to the south. The soil was mostly quite soft allowing the use of trowels for much of the excavation. Spoil heaps and the trench surface were swept frequently by metal detectorists.

4.1.2 Results

A section of the west facing side of the excavation is shown in Figure 6.

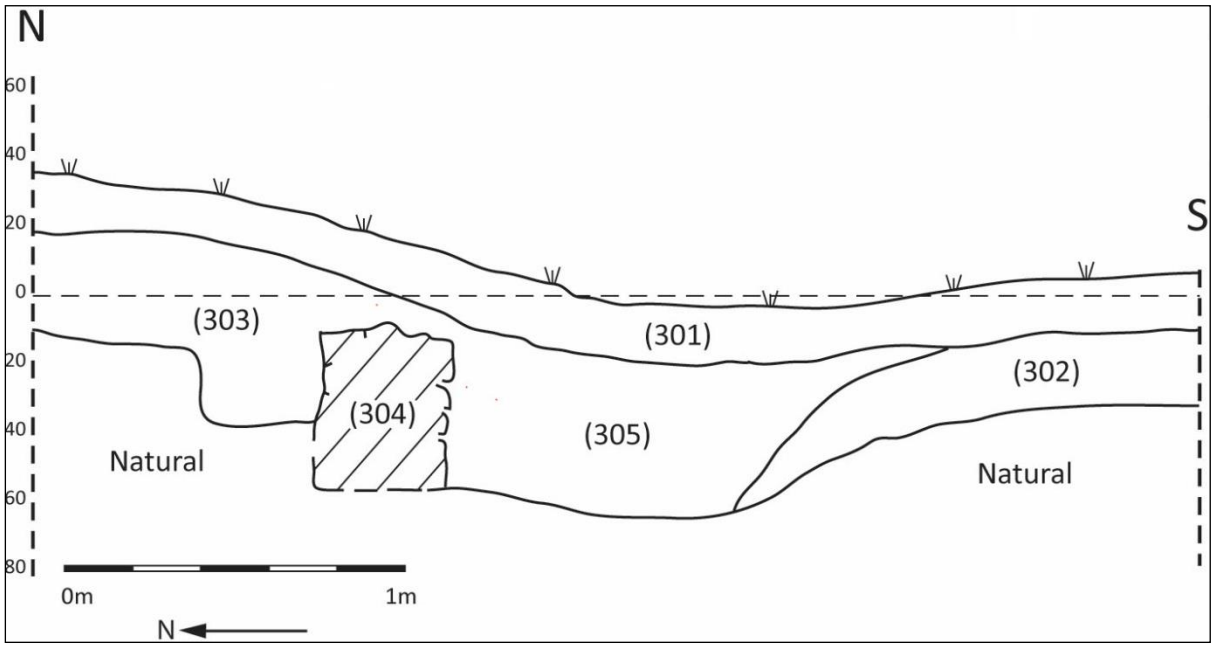

Figure 6. Section of the west facing side of Trench 3

Following removal of turf and topsoil, the base of a stone wall (Context 304) was discovered, about 40 cm wide and running roughly E - W across the trench, Figure 7.

Figure 7. Trench 3 showing the base of a flint wall

The mortared surface, emerging at a depth of about 45cm, comprised worked flints, with faces showing to the south. A couple of courses down two securely mortared, dressed blocks of limestone, 20-25cms long were exposed. To the north of the wall, there was a substantial quantity of infill (Context 303), which had been used to raise and level the lawn, comprising sandy brown soil and rubble - including roof tile fragments, mortar and some faced flints. This material also extended slightly over the line of the wall into the context below. To the south of the wall a shallow ditch was evident, filled with soil, CBM and numerous 19th and 20th century household items (Context 305). Further south, beyond the ditch the ground was flat and undisturbed.

It seems unlikely that the wall could be the remains of a Ha-Ha, given the maximum elevation of no more than 1m from the bottom of the ditch to the, apparently raised, upper lawn. The Ha-Ha at Grey's Court for example, is at least 1.4 metres high. Interpretation of this wall is discussed in Section 5, below.

4.1.3 Finds

From the topsoil down, the trench produced substantial quantities of CBM, mainly broken roof tile with some brick, mortar and some faced flints. As well as this material, also uncovered were number of fragments of 19th and 20th century household goods/nails/hinges but little or nothing from earlier periods. This suggested that both demolition material and household rubbish might have been used as infill for the ditch to the south of the wall and to raise the level of the lawn.

4.2 Trenches 5 and 6

These two small (0.5m x 0.5m) test pits were dug to check if CBM was present across the lawn. CBM (predominantly roof tile) was recovered from both trenches. Their location is shown in Figure 5. There were other modern small finds including pottery sherds, clay pipe fragments, animal bone, glass and ferrous metal.

Table 1 shows the roof tile material found in Trenches 3, 5 and 6.

Trench No.	Trench Area (m^2)	Mass of roof tile (kg)	Density (kg/m^2)
Trench 3	3.40	20.45	6.01
Trench 5	0.25	0.63	2.52
Trench 6	0.25	2.35	9.40
Totals/Average	3.90	23.43	6.01

Table 1 Roof tile material from Trenches 3, 5 and 6

From Table 1 it can be seen that the average density of roof tiles is $6.01kg/m^2$ of lawn sampled. A typical plain roof tile (dimensions approximately 266mm x 54mm x 14mm) weighs approximately 1.1kg so average number of roof tiles in the trenches is $5.4tiles/m^2$. Assuming that this average was uniform across the whole lawn and taking the lawn to be 45m x 23m i.e. lawn area to be $1035m^2$, there would be approximately 5639 roof tiles in the lawn.

When laid there are approximately 60 tiles per m^2 of roof and so the lawn would contain sufficient tiles to cover $94m^2$. But a pitched roof covers a smaller area of building. Assuming a pitch of 45 degrees, this would cover approximately $67m^2$ – say a building approximately 8m x 8m. This seems insufficient to cover the roof of the old house (estimated around $300m^2$) but might have been sufficient to cover a small outbuilding. Whilst we acknowledge that this calculation is of somewhat speculative it may serve to explain the quantity of CBM found in the context of attempting to identify the exact placement of the former house and any outbuildings associated with it which is discussed further in Section 5, below.

5. THE HOUSE AND OTHER BUILDINGS

In Section 4 physical evidence of a stone wall comprising worked flint and dressed limestone blocks, and of roofing material from former buildings was presented. Below we consider this and documentary evidence to examine the likely built environment prior to the 1871 house rebuilding and to consider if any of the evidence may relate to the former medieval grange of Thame Abbey.

5.1 A drawing from 1762

Early documentary evidence of the buildings is scant: the house was described as a "*very respectable and commodious Residence"* in a sale notice of 1842 (Oxford Journal) and in the hearth tax records of 1665, and now called Wyfold Court, the house was of some size, having six hearths.

The earliest known drawing was from 1762, Figure 8, which shows a walled area including a house and barn, and the end of a further building outside the wall to the left of the picture (Bodleian Library a). The condition of the stone wall suggests considerable age at the time of drawing and so it could potentially derive from medieval monastic times.

Figure 8. Water colour entitled "South View of Wyfold Priory Oxfordshire April the 13. 1762". Artist unknown. Bodleian Library a.

Given that the watercolour is identified as a "South View" it seems likely that the remains of the wall found in Trench 3 are the footings of the wall depicted in Figure 8. Close inspection of Figure 9, a 20th century postcard of Wyfold Grange, confirms the remains of a stone wall running across the lawn in an east-west direction which is very likely a continuation of the wall found in Trench 3. The line of this wall can also be seen in the 1898 Ordnance Survey map (Figure 1) just north and west of the word "Wyfold".

Figure 9. Postcard: photograph of Wyfold Grange postmarked October 26th 1921

In Section 4 a crude estimate was made of the potential size of building that could be roofed by the ceramic tiles found in the lawn excavations. It was suggested that this could be a building of around 8m x 8m. Perhaps this represents the remains of the barn shown in Figure 8 which is located at the west end of the present lawn.

The building to the extreme left Figure 8 appears to be in the position of the northern range of the present stables building. The Tithe Apportionment map for Checkendon (Figure 10) shows the stables buildings and courtyard configured similarly to their present arrangement (now in use as a domestic residence) but with no eastern range. The Tithe map of Rotherfield Peppard (Figure 11) also includes representations of Wyfold Grange as the boundary between the parishes passes right through the house (see also Figure 1). The location of the house on both Tithe maps is similar to that of the present house in relation to the other buildings and the pond.

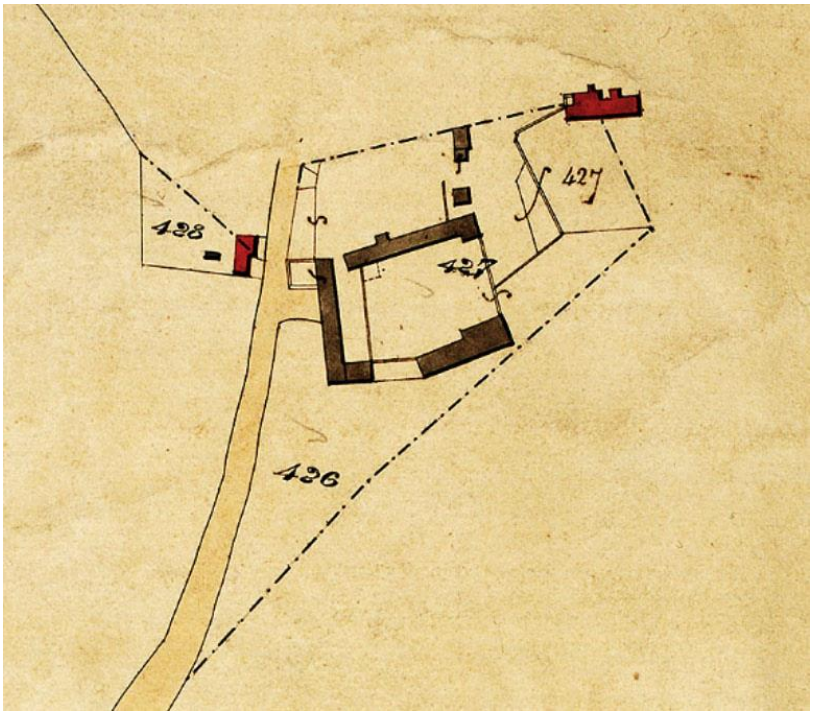

Figure10. Part of 1841 Tithe Apportionment map of Checkendon

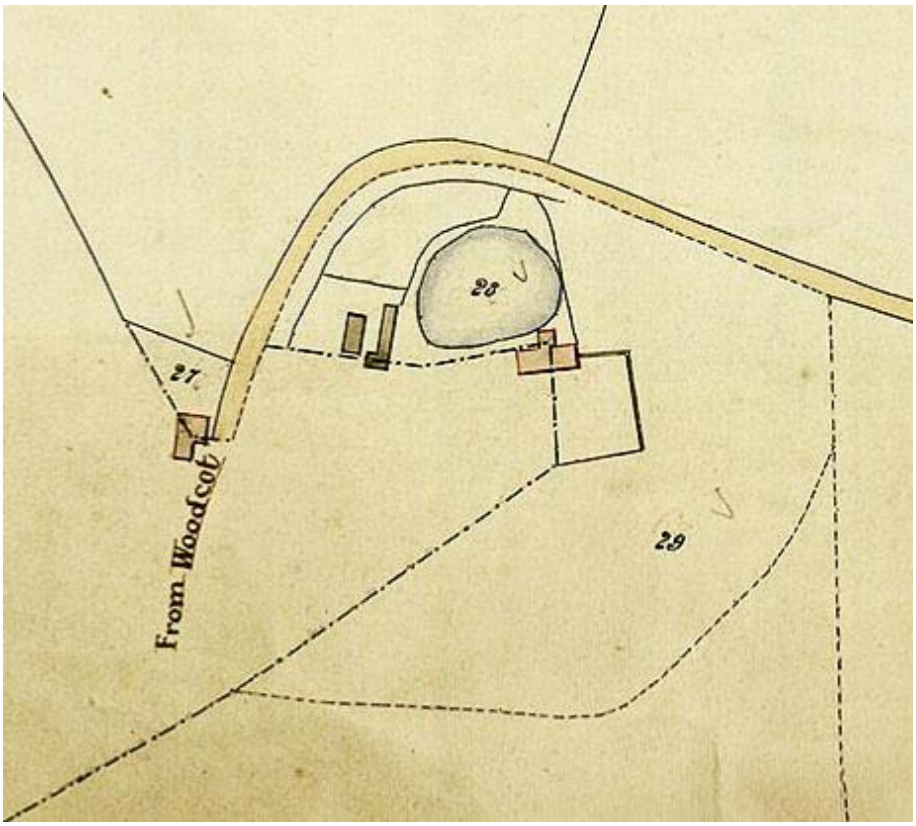

Figure 11. Part of 1841 Tithe map of Rotherfield Peppard

In summary, the physical evidence from Trench 3 confirms the wall shown on the 1762 drawing, which is still evident above ground on the 1898 Ordnance Survey map and the 1921 photographic postcard. The house and stables buildings on the drawing appear in a correct relationship to the wall as indicated on the Tithe Apportionment maps of 1841. The barn on the drawing, now missing, may have left traces in the large quantity of roof tile fragments found in the present lawn, where it used to be situated. This convergence of documentary and archaeological evidence serves to confirm the veracity of the 1762 drawing.

5.2 A drawing from 1868

A drawing of 1868, just a few years before its demolition, (Figure12) shows Wyfold Court as a very grand house with twin castellated towers with a large gothic window between, and a large barn to the right (Bodleian Library, b). The Bodleian cataloguing says "*possibly fanciful or mislabelled, or showing a mock-medieval addition"*. To what extent this drawing is a realistic representation of the house in 1868 is assessed below.

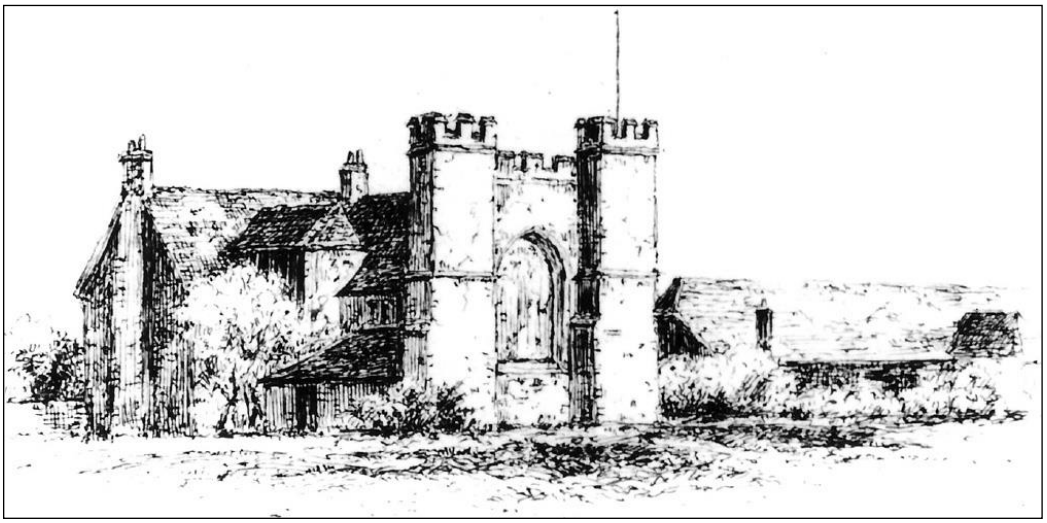

Figure 12. Pen and Ink drawing of Wyfold Grange, 1868, possibly from the northeast. Bodleian Library (b).

In their detailing, the castellated towers are somewhat reminiscent of remaining parts of Thame Abbey, now called Thame Park (Figure 13). Oxford Archaeology undertook a Heritage Assessment and Survey of Thame Park (SMJ, 2002, p60). They concluded that parts of the present building "*incorporate substantial surviving elements from the medieval monastic buildings of the Cistercian Abbey*". The western part of the south range (the left-hand section on Figure 13) *"belongs to the earliest phase of construction*".

Figure 13. The south range of Thame Park. Courtesy of Thame Museum

The perspective of the 1868 drawing suggests that it must be a view from the northeast and the barn must be the predecessor of the present stables building, which, as has been discussed above, is confirmed on the Checkendon Tithe Apportionment map (Figure 10). It is also possible to reconcile the Figure 8 view (from the south), the Figure 12 view (from the northeast) and the T-shaped building on the Rotherfield Peppard Tithe Apportionment map (Figure 11). It should also be noted that our excavation of a short section of wall (Trench 3, see Section 4 above) revealed the presence of recycled dressed stone on the site suggesting that there had been at least one stone building at some time.

By 1870, when the house was sold by George Donkin's trustees, the house is described as being in "*good order, sufficiently commodious for a gentleman's shooting box (there are four sitting rooms, six bedrooms, and five attics, besides kitchens and offices), capable at slight expense of being converted into a family house*" (Oxford Journal, 1870). This description fits well with the 1762 and 1868 drawings. It is not clear if the façade was a remnant of the medieval grange or a more modern Gothic revival but, given the architectural links to Thame Abbey, compatibility with both Tithe maps and the sale description, and the confirmation of limestone on site, the former possibility certainly cannot be ruled out.

So, in summary, it seems as if the 1868 drawing is compatible with the 1762 drawing and other documentary and physical evidence. It may be reasonably realistic and neither "*fanciful*" nor the picture "*misplaced*" as suggested by the Bodleian.

5.3 The present buildings

The 1870 sale description continues "*This house would, at all events, afford a comfortable residence during the erection of a Mansion, for which the estate is admirably adapted, and was partially prepared by a late owner*" (Oxford Journal, 1870). It seems, therefore, that in a Victorian age where heritage was not viewed in the way it is seen today, that the medieval manor was already seen as old fashioned, with its estate ripe for the development of a new Mansion. This is exactly what the new owner, Edward Hermon did, building the new Wyfold Court on a site about a mile away from the historic Grange. Hermon, a very rich industrialist who made his fortune from the Lancashire cotton industry, was clearly no lover of farming, and in May 1871 all the farming equipment and animals were sold off by auction. (Berkshire Chronicle, 1871).

The old house was demolished and the current house, from 1877 known as Wyfold Grange, was built in only a year. A number of early 20th century postcards depicting Wyfold Grange exist of which two are shown in Figures 9 and 14 and another (postmarked February 15th 1908) is on the title page.

Figure 14. Postcard: photograph of Wyfold Grange postmarked July 27th 1933

There are echoes of the former house design seen in the 1762 drawing in the roofline, the gables and the chimney. Perhaps the 1871 house was in some measure a Victorian copy of the former house on the same footprint. The design has elements of Arts and Crafts style and is decorated with Flemish diagonal bond diapering.

A photograph of the house taken in 2022 (Figure 15) shows that at some point in the last 100 years, believed to be in the first half of the 20th century, the house has lost its central gable but otherwise remains unchanged from the southern perspective. There have been 20th century additions to the north and east.

Figure 15. View of the house in 2022 taken from similar position as Figure 9

Members of Oxfordshire Buildings Record undertook a brief inspection of the loft space as part of this project. It was found that all roof timbers and brickwork, including chimneys, were modern, presumably dating from construction in 1871. There was no evidence of any part of the former house having been retained.

The cottage to the west of the house, portrayed inconsistently on the two Tithe maps (Figures 10 and 11), still remains though, as it is now a brick built structure, it is probably a later replacement. There has been some extension since the 1898 OS map (Figure 1).

The present stables buildings are of brick and knapped flint construction (Figure 16) as is the wall of the drive, to its north. It seems likely that the stables and the cottage may have been constructed contemporaneously with the house, on the footprints of former structures.

Figure 16. The stables (foreground) and cottage (centre left) c1970

6. WATER SUPPLY AND THE CISTERN EXCAVATION

Until the introduction of piped water in the early 20th century, water supply in the Chilterns had always been problematic. The use of ponds and wells was common. In our landscape archaeology report we have explored the hydrogeology of the pond at Wyfold Grange and shown it to be a natural perched aquifer. However, the Wyfold pond was shallow. Based on present levels it was only 64cm deep when full. For comparison the two ponds at Greenmoor (Woodcote) are segregated: one for human use was several metres deep, the other, for animals, was relatively shallow. Similarly at Crays Pond the pond was fairly deep and still retains a hand pump for human use. It seems unlikely that the Wyfold pond would be sufficiently clean to be used for human water supply except as an absolute last resort in extreme dry times.

6.1 Wells

There has long been speculation that there was a well at Wyfold Grange. Indeed, the following report appeared in the Berkshire Chronical (1873):

"Distressing Suicide at Wyfold – A distressing case of suicide occurred at Wyfold Court on Wednesday morning. Mrs Tobitt, wife of the steward to Mr E. Hermon, M.P., of Wyfold Court rose before 6 o'clock on that day, removed the covering from a well 360ft deep which had only recently been constructed, and threw herself down it. Of course, she was killed instantaneously, her head being literally smashed and her body dreadfully mangled. An inquest was held on Christmas Day and a verdict of "temporary insanity" was returned. Insanity had been found in deceased's family before."

What truth there is behind this story cannot be determined but it is certain that if there were a well at Wyfold it could not have been 360ft (110m) deep. That would put the bottom of the well almost at sea level. As we have shown in our hydrogeology study in our report *Landscape Archaeology at Wyfold*, the water table (main Chilterns aquifer) at Wyfold is likely to vary between extremes of approximately 97m and 127m AOD. Ground level at the house at Wyfold Grange is approximately 120m so the aquifer would be in the range 23m below ground level to 7m above: the latter accounting for occasional flooding. So it would have been impossible, and

indeed there would have been no need, to dig a well significantly deeper than 23m. Perhaps there was some confusion with another well e.g. the Maharaja's Well at nearby Stoke Row constructed in 1864 with a depth of 368ft.

No known maps indicate the presence of a well at Wyfold Grange. There is a small circular building directly to the west of the house shown on the 1898 OS map (Figure 1) but this is not labelled and, in any case, looks too big to be a well. Unfortunately, this location was not readily accessible to our investigations due to a later wall built, and trees growing, over it and so could not be further investigated.

6.2 Water cisterns

The 1898 (Figure 1) map indicates a water pump ("P") at the southeast corner of the stables. Removal of a large stone cover in this location revealed a beehive construction water cistern shown from the inside in Figure 17. Its base diameter was approximately 1.8m and potential water height approximately 1.2m giving a capacity of about $3m^3$ (800 gallons). The inlet pipe can be traced to show that the supply for this cistern was rainwater collected on the roof of the adjacent stables.

Figure 17 Internal photograph of the garden water cistern showing old (ceramic) and new (plastic) inlet pipes.

In the curtilage of the cottage within the enclosure, to the west of the house, there is a circular feature of just over 1m diameter, covered by large wooden blocks. An excavation was started here and quickly revealed the top of another cistern presumably fed from the roof of the cottage. Unfortunately, the brickwork forming this cistern had started to collapse and it was felt unsafe to continue with the excavation.

The present landowner of Wyfold Grange recalled, as a child, seeing another large hole in the ground immediately to the west of the house, and it being covered by a metal plate. By metal detecting and probing with an auger, the location was determined and an excavation, Trench 4, commenced.

6.3 Trench 4: The house water cistern

6.3.1 Methodology

The turf was removed revealing disturbed soils and a steel ring. Further excavation using trowels and hand mattocks, exposed two large capstones, sitting more or less horizontally and side by side about 6 m from the wall of the house and 10-20 cm below the surface of the lawn. One was a rectangular stone slab just over a metre long and the other was a concrete quarter-circle cover with a large embedded ring. These covers were lifted away using the ring, to reveal an opening into a substantial cistern located directly beneath (Figure 18).

Figure 18. The house water cistern with one of the capstones removed

After this initial excavation, digging continued all around the cistern to a total depth of about 40 cm and later the trench was extended slightly towards the house.

6.3.2 Results

With the cover removed, it was possible to get a clear view into and around the cistern. This revealed a beehive shaped construction about 3 m in diameter and 4.1m depth with a cylindrical wall of brick and mortar, an exterior coating of concrete and a lined interior. At the top, the wall curved in towards the centre to provide a circular opening into the cistern about 60 cm in diameter. It would have held about 28m^3 (7400 gallons) of water. From the construction it seems likely that the cistern was probably 19th century. Figure 19 shows a plan of the excavation.

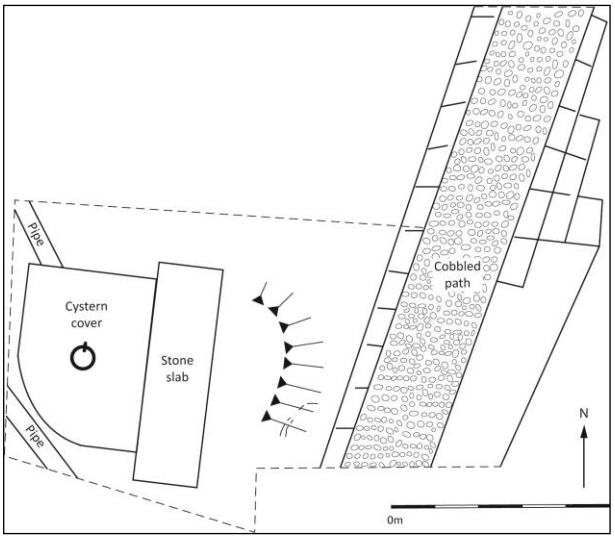

Figure 19. Plan of house cistern excavation.

In the south east corner of the trench, the outer concrete covering of the wall was not present and a patch of altered brickwork was visible. This may have been where a pump was originally located as there was a vertical steel pipe within the cistern leading up to this area.

Following the excavation around the cistern, the trench was extended slightly towards the house, revealing a well laid cobble path, probably of Victorian construction, running alongside the cistern, about 60 cm from the stone slab. This might have been used to gain access to the cistern and to the pump in particular.

At the landowners request a portion of this cobbled path was left exposed as a reminder of the excavation.

6.3.3 Finds

As might be expected in this situation, the soil above and surrounding the cistern was heavily disturbed and showed no signs of stratigraphy. It did contain some typical household finds, such as nails and other bits of metal, CBM, animal bones and glass fragments (all modern) together with a single piece of medieval or earlier pottery. There was nothing of particular significance as the pottery sherd was not in context, and probably came in from elsewhere.

7. OTHER SMALL FINDS FROM WYFOLD GRANGE

7.1 Metal detecting

A metal detecting survey throughout the enclosure and adjacent fields is described in our report *Landscape Archaeology at Wyfold.* The whole assemblage of finds 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 suggests continuous activity at the site since the medieval period. No finds earlier than AD 1180 were found.

7.2 Post-medieval finds from the northern perimeter

Trench 1 across the northern bank and ditch is described in our report *Excavations of the Earthwork at Wyfold Grange* and the contexts referred to below are illustrated there, in section 2.2.2. However it is more appropriate to report on the post-medieval finds from that trench here and they are listed by context in Table 2.

The topsoil (Context 101) and the upper fill of the ditch (Context 104) contained a general mixture of material, mostly of more recent or indeterminate date. Small finds within context 102, the upper part of the bank, were recorded by depth, measured from the crown. Small amounts of finds were found in the upper part of the context – where there were areas of disturbance caused by tree roots, raising the likelihood of intrusion – but otherwise Context 102 was bare of finds. The lower bank Context 103 was also bare of finds, as was the lower ditch fill, Context 105.

Context	**101**	**102**		**104**
Sub-Context Depth		0-36 cm	36-51 cm	
Pot	180g flower pot, 240g various			15g, 1 sherd, stoneware
Clay Pipe	8g, 4 pieces, AOB			1g, 1 stem
Bone				
Flint/ Stone				200g 1 core?
Glass	300g, 30 pieces, mainly bottle		2g, 1 piece	460g, 3 pieces, bottles
Metal	330g ferrous, various	79g, 4 pieces		
CBM	2.2kg mainly tile, some brick	35g, 6 pieces		350g, tile
Wood/ Charcoal		169g, 3 pieces Charcoal		
Other	Part of leather shoe 70g, 5p piece, slag/coal 500g			

Table 2. Small post-medieval finds from Trench 1

One find of particular interest was three sherds of a clay pipe shown in Figure 20. This is decorated with the letters AOB and bulls' horns. This is the emblem of the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes and the pipe is thought to be a 19th century initiation token.

Figure 20. "AOB" clay pipe

8. CONCLUSIONS

In this report we have concentrated on archaeological evidence to support the historic narrative presented in VCH XX and other sources, and in particular the evolution from a Cistercian Grange to a domestic residence. We have focused particularly on finding evidence for the former house which was replaced by the present one in 1871, a little before the estate centre moved a short distance northwest to a new grandiose residence: "Wyfold Court".

We have also considered, including by partial excavation, the water supply for the domestic residences and in particular evaluated three water cisterns and their supply by rooftop collection of rainwater. These cisterns are likely to have been of 19th century construction.

The geophysics programme identified a ditch feature which, upon excavation, revealed the remains of a stone wall. This wall has been identified with that shown on a sketch of 1762, and its remains were still visible on a 1921 photographic postcard. Ceramic roof tiles from this excavation, supplemented by two more small excavations on the lawn, may have come from the barn shown in the 1762 sketch. The archaeological and photographic evidence validates the sketch.

Doubts have been cast over the veracity of a later sketch (1868) by the Bodleian Library but we have shown that it is not incompatible with the former sketch nor the Tithe Apportionment maps of 1841 nor a property sale description of 1870. In addition to this documentary evidence, the presence of dressed limestone in the excavated wall supports the idea of a more imposing building than had previously been allowed.

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WYFOLD GRANGE, OXFORDSHIRE
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WALK

by Nigel Peters

INTRODUCTION

One of the aims of SOAG's Wyfold Grange archaeology project was to organise a walk linking Wyfold Grange with other earthworks identified by the Chiltern Conservation Board's (CCB) 'Beacons of the Past' Lidar survey. The Lidar survey, Figure 1, shows Wyfold Grange at the north, with the Castle Grove hillfort to the southwest, and the Old Copse earthwork to the southeast. These have been linked together for a circular walk of 5 miles, including an extension to view Wyfold Court, the Victorian Gothic mansion built (by the then owner of Wyfold Grange), from 1871-76.

RESULTS

The walk was trialled as part of the CCB's Spring Walking Festival, with the walk taking place on 23 May 2022. The walk proved popular and was fully booked some time in advance, with 14 members of the public joining 8 of the SOAG Wyfold project team. An enjoyable time was had by all, with the post-walk questionnaires showing that the members of the public were really interested in the way SOAG members explained the archaeological history of the area.

The CCB have now positioned a heritage display panel at Gallowstree Common Playing Fields (SU 688 802). The panel includes a detailed description of Castle Grove hill fort and the former gallows site (giving the village its name).

WYFOLD WALK INSTRUCTIONS

There is car parking at the playing fields, so this makes a good start/finish point for the walk. The walk route is marked on the map (Figure 2). You are recommended to take OS Explorer map 171 'Chiltern Hills West' with you.

Note: this walk is on undulating ground, which can be muddy. There are some stiles to cross, so it is not suitable for those less mobile or with children's buggies. Throughout the walk, look for white arrows painted on trees, courtesy of The Chiltern Society, to indicate public footpaths, as a supplement to the county council signs which are at major junctions only.

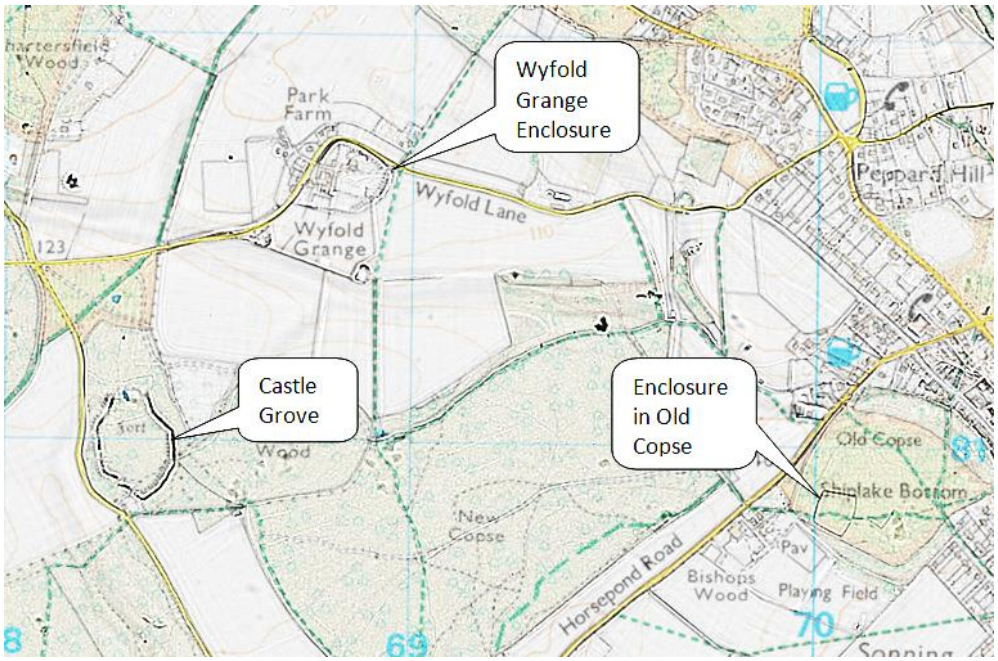

Figure 1. Lidar image overlaid on OS Explorer map showing Wyfold Grange, Castle Grove and the Old Copse enclosure.

(1) On leaving Gallowstree Common Playing fields, head past the cricket club practice nets and enter a woodland path. The path runs parallel to Horsepond Road. At the end of the path, turn right and cross the road, to enter a footpath directly opposite leading into Old Copse Wood, owned by the Woodland Trust. This is one of the few examples in the area of an ancient woodland. Soon after entering the wood cross a shallow earthwork, which you need to cross reference with the Lidar map to really appreciate the extent and nature of the enclosure. It is an interesting feature, date and use unknown, and will be the subject of further investigation by SOAG. Follow the woodland path until you reach the edge of the wood near housing at Sonning Common.

(2) Follow the path leading back at a right angle towards the old village well. Carefully cross the road and walk, facing the traffic, to the left for 50 metres. Enter a public footpath on your right, going through pasture fields and a small wood, giving lovely views towards Wyfold Lane, with Wyfold Grange and its surrounding Scots Pine trees visible on the horizon. Turn left and walk along Wyfold Lane towards the grange for 500 metres. This a quiet lane but beware of farm vehicles and the occasional car. The earthwork surrounding the grange fronts the lane, which is part of the medieval Goring-Henley drove road, discussed in our report *Landscape Archaeology at Wyfold, Oxforshire*. The section of the earthwork removed by SOAG for dating purposes can be seen just past the entrance to the grange.

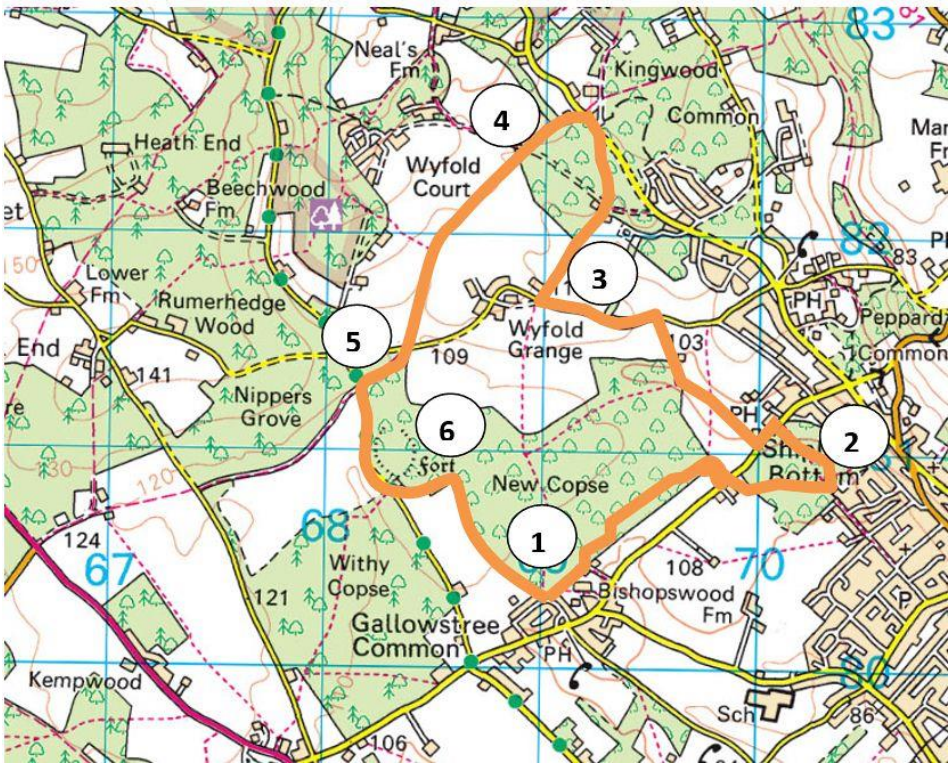

Figure 2. Route of SOAG Wyfold Archaeological Walk on OS Explorer map

(3) Retrace a few steps to the grange entrance, and opposite take the public footpath going towards Hazel Grove. Cross a private road heading to Wyfold Court, and turn left on a trackway for a short distance running parallel to the road at Kingswood Common.

(4) Turn left onto a bridleway which takes you back to the road leading to Wyfold Court. This gives a good view of the Victorian Gothic Mansion, built by Edward Hermon from 1871-76. Sold by his family in the 1932, the house became a psychiatric hospital before being renovated as luxury apartments in the 1990s. Hermon also owned Wyfold Grange. He demolished the medieval grange/manor in 1871, and rebuilt on the same footprint in 1871, whilst investing most of his wealth (he was reputedly the richest of the Lancastrian cotton and textile merchants) in creating this grand country house.

(5) The bridleway now passes a vineyard, increasingly popular in the Chilterns, before you come again to Wyfold Lane. Cross the lane, and almost immediately opposite, enter Wyfold Wood. Go past a pond, and exit the wood, turning left along a country lane, and proceed for 100 metres before entering the same wood on the left hand side.

(6) Going straight ahead you come to the embankment of the Iron Age hill fort known as Castle Grove. This is a scheduled monument. The earthwork embankments are largely in place, especially the side furthest from the road. Follow the embankment furthest from the road, walking in the ditch where possible, in a southerly direction until you leave the wood at Kate's Cottage. From here follow the path to the left through woodland. At a junction after 500 metres, turn right and return to Gallowstree Common playing fields.

NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Contributions are invited for *SOAG Bulletin*. Articles should preferably describe original field or documentary research undertaken by the author(s) and priority will be given to items relevant to South Oxfordshire.

Authors are reminded that copies of *SOAG Bulletin* are sent to the UK's legal deposit libraries, to local libraries, and to universities. The reputation of SOAG therefore rests in large part on the quality of *SOAG Bulletin*.

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Contributions an queries to the *SOAG Bulletin* Editor at:
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SOAG was established in 1969 and currently has over 130 members. The aims of the Group are to promote an active interest in archaeology and its allied disciplines, particularly in South Oxfordshire. It works in close cooperation with the County Archaeologist and other local archaeology and heritage officials, and is affiliated to the *Council for British Archaeology South Midlands Group*.

- Monthly meetings are held from September to April when lectures by professional speakers and members are given in an informal atmosphere
- There are opportunities for members to take part in excavations, fieldwalking, surveys and post-excavation work. Visits are made to places of interest in the summer – sometimes to sites not open to the public
- Members receive copies of our annual journal, *SOAG Bulletin*, which contains original articles focused on South Oxfordshire, and a bi-monthly newsletter, *SOAG Messenger*.
- Everyone from experts to complete beginners, of all ages, are warmly welcomed as new members.

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