BATH AND COUNTIES ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Monument Field
Prior Park
Bath

Tim Lunt

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Abstract

Monument Field at Prior Park is named for Ralph Allen's Monument, built circa 1766 by Bishop Warburton following Allen's death, which was demolished due to its dangerous condition in 1953. An earlier Gothic Lodge on the same site from the 16th century or earlier seems to have formed part of the later Monument. In addition the Wansdyke, dug circa 6th century, possibly crossed the field.

Geophysical survey has confirmed that there is stonework probably related to the Monument and Lodge structures in an area which relates to the mapped position of the Monument on the 1939 25 inch Ordnance Survey map. A bank and ditch which may be the Wansdyke also exists as shown on the 1939 map. All features are also apparent on a recent LIDAR survey.

Further research to understand and confirm these structures would require excavation and/or further geophysics.

Table of Contents

Abstract 2
1 Background 5
2 Acknowledgements 8
3 Introduction 9
3.1 Location 9
3.2 Dates 10
3.3 Personnel 10
3.4 The Site 10
4 Method 14
4.1 Gridding 14
4.2 Twin Probe Resistance 14
4.3 Magnetometry 14
4.4 Resistivity Profiles 15
4.5 Software 16
5 Results 17
5.1 Twin Probe Resistance 17
5.2 Magnetometry 18
5.3 Resistivity Profiles 20
5.3.1 The Stone Cross Mark 20
5.3.2 The Wansdyke 21
6 Comment and Conclusions 23
6.1 The Gothic Lodge and Ralph Allen's Monument 23
6.2 The Wansdyke 25
6.3 Conclusions 26
7 Related reading 28
Appendix A 29
1 Base Point 29
2 Grid Layout 29
3 Resistivity Profile Positions 30

List of Figures

Figure 1 : The Gothic Lodge, Thomas Robins © Victoria and Albert Museum, London 6
Figure 2 : Ralph Allen's Monument 7
Figure 3 : Location maps, Ordnance Survey © Crown copyright and Google Earth..... 9
Figure 4 : LIDAR of Monument Field © National Trust..... 11
Figure 5 : 1939 25 inch Ordnance Survey map © Crown copyright 12
Figure 6 : Stone cross mark at Monument Field looking north, August 2018 13
Figure 7 : Resistivity..... 14
Figure 8 : Magnetometry 15
Figure 9 : Resistivity profiling 15
Figure 10 : Twin-probe resistance survey, 0.5m probe separation and with LIDAR background..... 17
Figure 11 : Magnetometer results and with LIDAR background..... 19
Figure 12 : Resistivity profile across stone cross mark 20
Figure 13 : Wansdyke profiles positioned on resistivity grid background 22
Figure 14 : Drawing and plan of The Lodge from Ralph Allen survey map 23
Figure 15 : The Lodge as shown on the Thorpe (on the left) and Ralph Allen Survey maps (copy by Mike Chapman) 24
Figure 16 : Possible Lodge position on OS map and resistivity survey..... 25
Figure 17 : Grid Base Point..... 29
Figure 18 : Grid Numbering..... 30
Figure 19 : Resistivity profile positions 31

1 Background

Monument Field is an open field surrounded by the woodland known as Rainbow and Fairy Woods immediately to the east of Prior Park College. This is an area known as Prior Park which includes the Palladian mansion built by Ralph Allen and its gardens landscaped by Capability Brown. The survey was initiated to search for evidence of three structures known or thought to have existed on the field but now gone; a Monument to Ralph Allen built in the 18th century, a Gothic Lodge from the 16th century, and the very much earlier 6th century Wansdyke of the Dark Ages.

The Wansdyke (derived from Woden's Dyke) was a series of early mediaeval earthworks consisting of a bank with north facing ditch running from Savernake Forest in Wiltshire to Maes Knoll fort in Somerset. It is thought to have been built to delineate a frontier between the Briton and Anglo-Saxon worlds in the 5th and 6th centuries and Monument Field was on the border between these kingdoms of Wessex and Mercia. Although not now generally accepted as part of the Wansdyke by archaeologists early Ordnance Survey (OS) map show the dyke crossing the field on a diagonal towards the north-east corner.

By 1100 Prior Park and surrounding land on Claverton and Combe Down was part of a great deer park laid out by the Bishop of Bath and Wells, John of Tours. During the 13th century the western half of the Bishop's deer park was divided off and granted to the Prior of Bath including Monument Field where the wall on the east side formed part of the boundary between the two parks. After the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1539 the Prior's Park was later sub-divided with several owners and turned over to agriculture. Ralph Allen purchased these separate estates to reform the mediaeval park during and after the construction of his Prior Park mansion, built in the 1730s.

When Allen acquired Monument Field in 1750 there was a substantial gothic building standing there known as The Lodge. A drawing of the Lodge by Thomas Robins now in the V&A, London shows it had a round tower which Allen apparently enjoyed taking visitors up to show the views (Fig. 1). Research on Allen's deeds indicate that the Lodge already existed in the late 16th century, which period seems to fit the architectural style, but it may well have developed from an earlier structure as the site is suited for a mediaeval hunting lodge.

Figure 1 : The Gothic Lodge, Thomas Robins © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Following Allen's death in 1764 the estate passed to his wife Elizabeth until her death in 1766 and was then inherited by his niece Gertrude Warburton (née Tucker). She demolished the Lodge, seemingly because while living in Prior Park mansion she " …would not be overlooked by any person", but her husband Bishop Warburton, whose career had benefitted greatly from the connection with Ralph Allen, probably retained the tower and an outer wall of the Lodge to form the basis of Ralph Allen's Monument which he built to commemorate Allen's life (Fig 2).

Figure 2 : Ralph Allen's Monument

The Prior Park estate passed down through Allen's descendants until 1828 when Bishop Baines bought it for use as a Roman Catholic College. The mansion is now owned by Prior Park College and the surrounding gardens and parkland by the National Trust.

Monument Field is leased by the National Trust to Prior Park College for use as a playing field. Ralph Allen's Monument was demolished in 1953 due to its ruinous and dangerous condition but the ex-chairman of BACAS has fond memories of climbing the tower as a boy during the 1940s and surviving unscathed !

2 Acknowledgements

The National Trust and Prior Park College for access to the field.

Wikipedia for background information

Bath Record Office for assistance with the Ralph Allen Estate survey map

Mike Chapman for his assistance and the use of images from his booklet “A Guide to the Estates of Ralph Allen around Bath”.

John Oswin for his assistance and support with the writing of the report

Rick Buettner for photographs

The Thomas Robins drawing of The Gothic Lodge is courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London

LIDAR images, courtesy of the National Trust

Ordnance Survey (OS) maps, © Crown copyright

Aerial photographs, courtesy of Google Earth.

The time and effort of all the BACAS and National Trust staff and volunteers involved

3 Introduction

3.1 Location

Monument Field is part of the land owned by the National Trust on Combe Down, Bath and is currently leased to Prior Park College for use as a playing field. It is at ST765623 and approximately 300m long by 200m wide, tapering at its northern end.

Figure 3 shows the location.

Figure 3 : Location maps, Ordnance Survey © Crown copyright and Google Earth

3.2 Dates

The survey was undertaken on four days from 28 October to 1 November 2018.

3.3 Personnel

The survey was led by Tim Lunt and undertaken by the following members of the Bath and Counties Archaeological Society :

John Knapper, Elpitha Lemos, Lawrie Scott, Rachel Dacey, Jane Hieatt, Sharn Pepperell, Angela Trenchard, Jeremy Trenchard, Amelia Allen, John Oswin, Sandra Heward, Heather Greenwood, Roger Wilkes, Roger Underhill, Henry Lowe.

Magnetometry was carried out by Rob Arkell.

Resistivity processing and data analysis was assisted by John Oswin, Rob Arkell and John Samways

Volunteers from the National Trust Skyline Archaeology Monitoring Group also assisted with the survey as follows :

David Stubbs, Sue Rhodes, Martin Ansell, Elaine Flemons, Mike Dennis-Jones

3.4 The Site

The site is not scheduled and at the time of the survey was a flat, mown grass field with rugby posts and marked rugby pitches. There are some undulations apparent across the field which show up clearly in the LIDAR survey image, Fig 4.

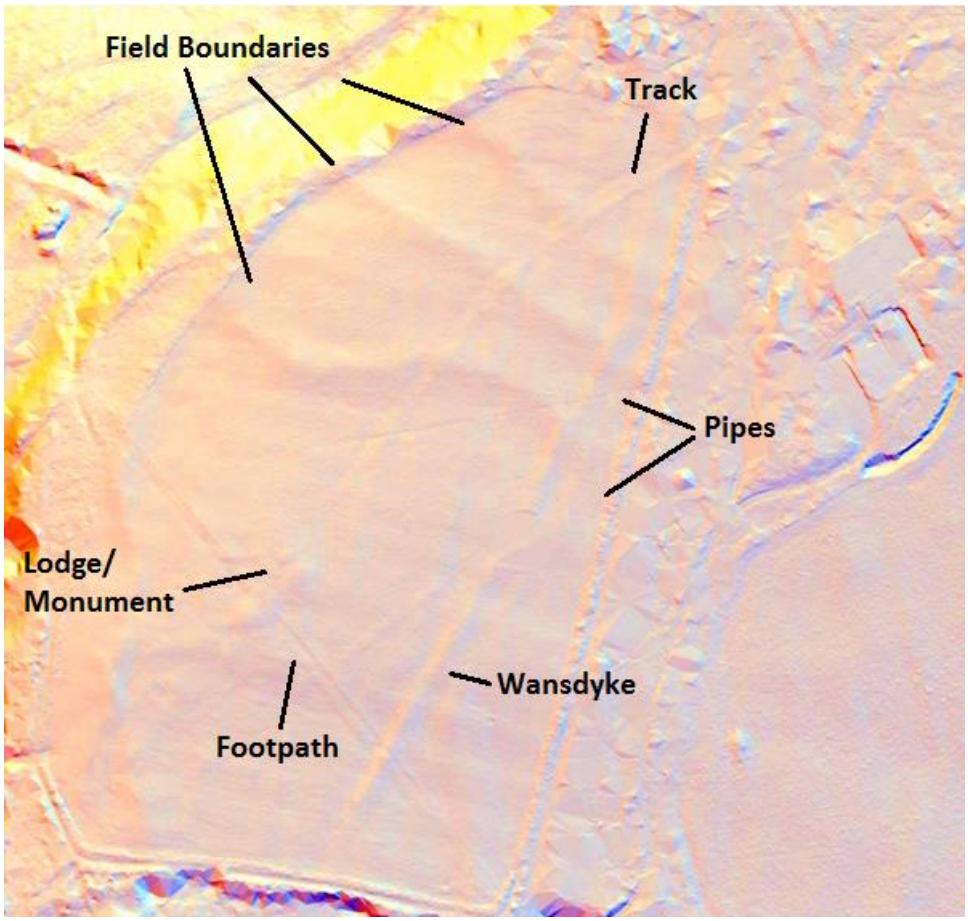

Figure 4 : LIDAR of Monument Field © National Trust

The three banks shown crossing the north of the area in the LIDAR image appear to be early field boundaries and these are broken by a possible later track running to the south west towards the uneven area thought to be the site of the Lodge and Monument. This area is also crossed by a diagonal line from the west considered to be the public footpath shown on the 1939 OS 25 inch map (Fig 5). This footpath also crosses the route of the possible Wansdyke bank travelling from centre bottom to top corner of the field, also marked on the OS map. There are also two other diagonals which are the results of the trenches dug for cables or pipes running across the field to Klondyke House in the wood to the east.

A Historic Environment Record (HER), MBN10101, records the earthwork noted as Wansdyke in Monument Field on the County Series map. OS, 1939.

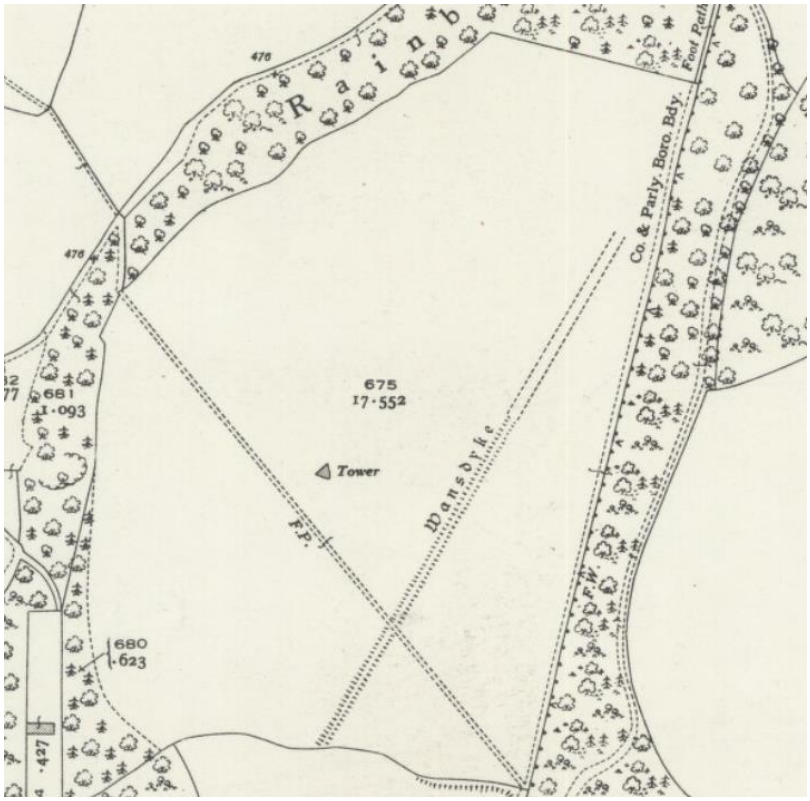

Figure 5 : 1939 25 inch Ordnance Survey map © Crown copyright

The most significant feature visible on the ground is a small cross outline (Fig 6) at ST 76526308, 6.5m long by 3.4m wide. It includes some stonework on the edges. This was very clear during the Summer 2018 drought and was still apparent from dead grass during the survey. No other clear marks could be distinguished in this area of the field during the drought other than it was browner than other parts suggesting more underlying stone and rubble.

Figure 6 : Stone cross mark at Monument Field looking north, August 2018

4 Method

4.1 Gridding

The 30 grids completed were laid out in 20m squares and covered a central section of the field to straddle the predicted sites of the Monument, Lodge and Wansdyke.

The layout, grid numbering and base point position is shown in Appendix A.

4.2 Twin Probe Resistance

The investigation used twin-probe resistance with 1m probe spacing performed with the TR/CIA and RM devices. Readings were taken at 0.5m intervals along lines 1m apart giving 400 readings per 20m grid square.

Figure 7 : Resistivity

4.3 Magnetometry

The magnetometer used was a Bartington 601-2 dual fluxgate gradiometer. Readings were taken at four per metre along lines 1m apart, giving 1600 readings per 20m grid square. The machine effectively measures two lines simultaneously, allowing a rapid rate of progress, up to 2 ha/day.

Figure 8 : Magnetometry

4.4 Resistivity Profiles

32 probes were used with two profiles using 1m spacing (giving a line length of 31m) and one profile using 0.5m spacing (giving a line length of 15.5m). Data was collected with the TR/CIA resistivity meter.

Profile 1 covered the visible stone cross feature in Grid 2. Profiles 2 and 3 covered different sections of the Wansdyke bank and ditch. The position of each profile is shown in Appendix A3.

Figure 9 : Resistivity profiling

4.5 Software

INSITE v3 (1994) was used as the principal analysis software. This is now regarded as obsolete but is still preferred by BACAS because of its very versatile grid mapping capabilities and its visual approach. BACAS has developed its own proprietary software to allow the twin probe resistance meters to be downloaded to computer and then the data imported into INSITE.

The magnetometer was downloaded to computer using Bartington proprietary software, then passed through BACAS proprietary de-stripe (zero median) software before being imported into INSITE.

Resistivity profile data was prepared with the Resistivity Converter program for TR systems and images then generated through RES2DINV from Geotomo Software.

Image overlays in this report were generated using the Global Mapper geographic information system (GIS).

5 Results

5.1 Twin Probe Resistance

The full twin-probe resistance survey using 0.5m probe separation is shown below and with a LIDAR background in Figure 10.

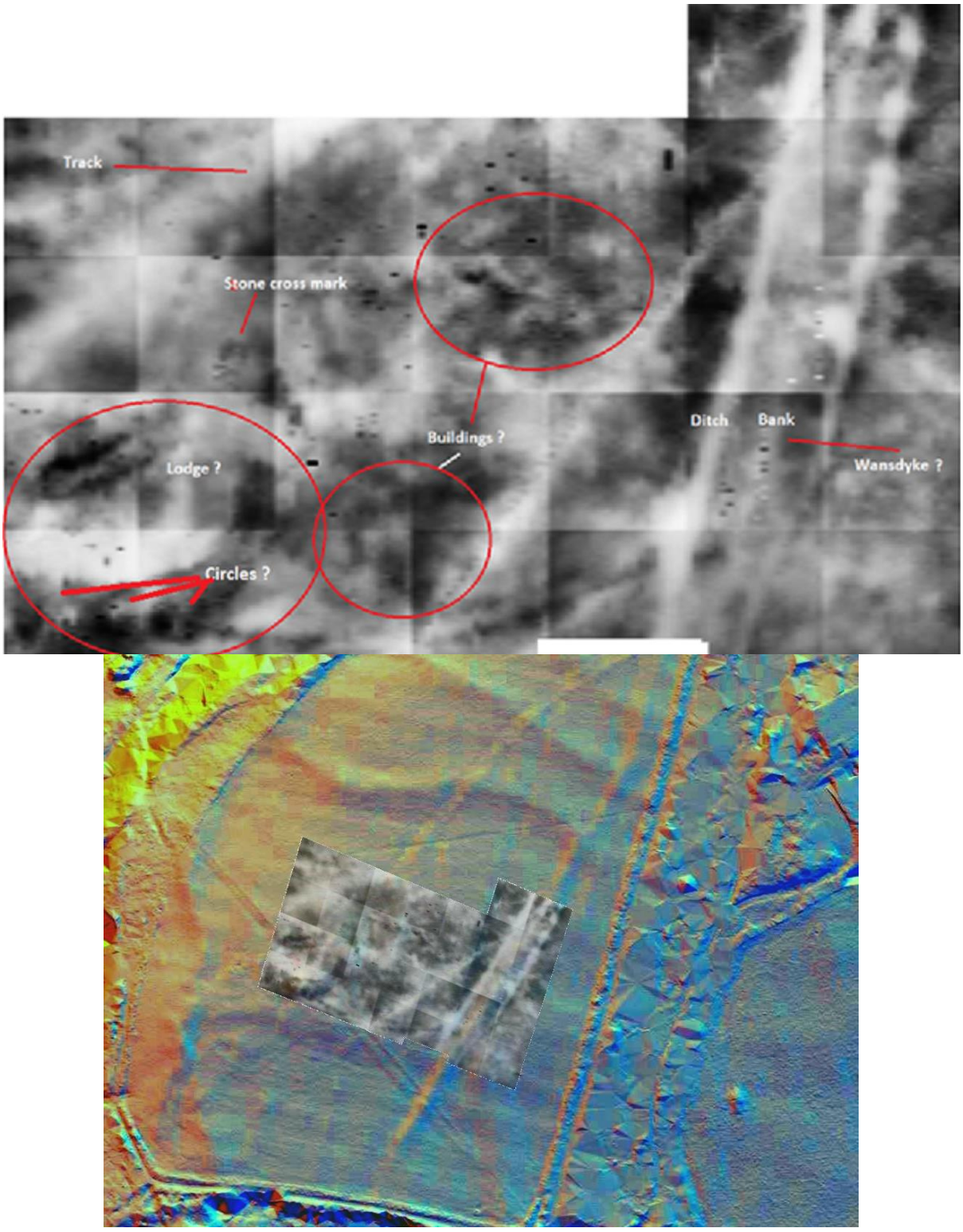

Figure 10 : Twin-probe resistance survey and with LIDAR background

Much of the shading in the resistivity plot is likely to be underlying geology but some features are apparent. The uneven area of ground in the south west has a horseshoe shape of higher resistance which may be the remains of the walls or foundations of the Lodge. Three darker circles of unknown origin also show here. There are also darker resistance outlines in the centre of the survey which may indicate other buildings.

The stone cross mark shows clearly with the track visible in the LIDAR passing around the north west of the Lodge area. The line of the two cable/pipes to Klondyke House to the east of the field cross at the top left and centre of the grids. The possible Wansdyke ditch and bank show clearly with ditch (lower resistance) to the west and the higher resistance of the bank lining up with the surface feature shown in the LIDAR.

5.2 Magnetometry

The magnetometry results shown in Fig 11 are marred by the three metallic rugby goal posts and a major water/sewage pipe in the survey area.

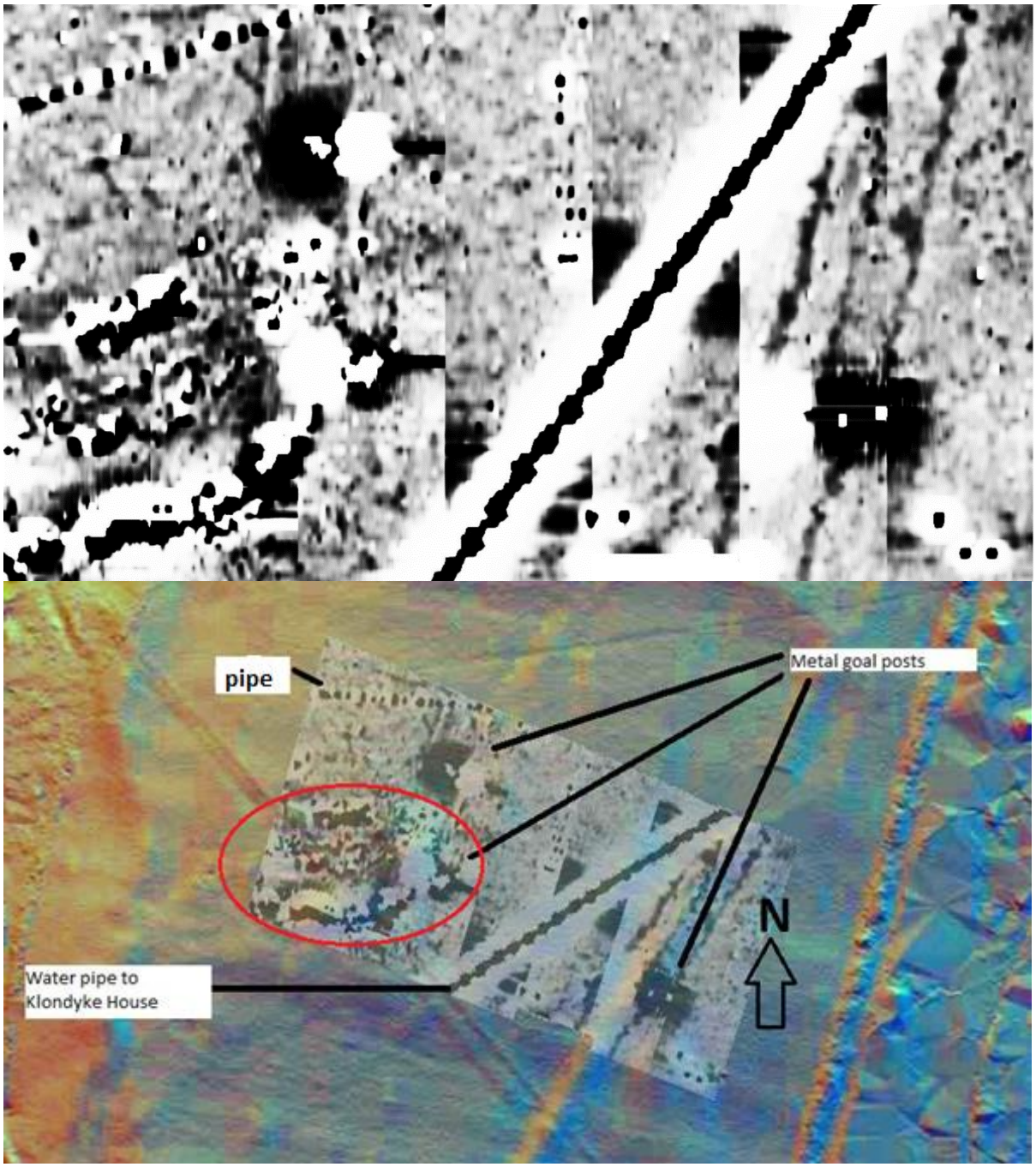

Figure 11 : Magnetometer results and with LIDAR background

However there is clearly a confused area including possible masonry shown by the red oval in the south west but the other two possible buildings in the central area seen in resistivity are not apparent. The lines of the possible Wansdyke bank and ditch in the east can be seen passing by the goal post.

No clear outline of foundations shows in the stonework area but it suggests a rectangular area of stone and disturbed ground which could identify the site of the Lodge.

5.3 Resistivity Profiles

Three profiles were made. The first across the stone cross mark; the other two profiles across different sections of the Wansdyke bank and ditch.

All the resistivity profiles taken were found to have very high readings. It is uncertain why this occurred but the results must be treated with caution. Detailed positions for the profiles are show in Appendix A3.

5.3.1 The Stone Cross Mark

Figure 12 below shows the profile taken at 0.5m spacing across the stone cross mark. It highlights the two stone edges of the mark but probably due to the high resistance readings mentioned, the red or purple shades that would be expected from the higher resistance of stone do not show.

The profile provides no other evidence of stonework in the vicinity of the mark and indicates some separation from the area with the darker high resistance where the Lodge may have stood to the south west.

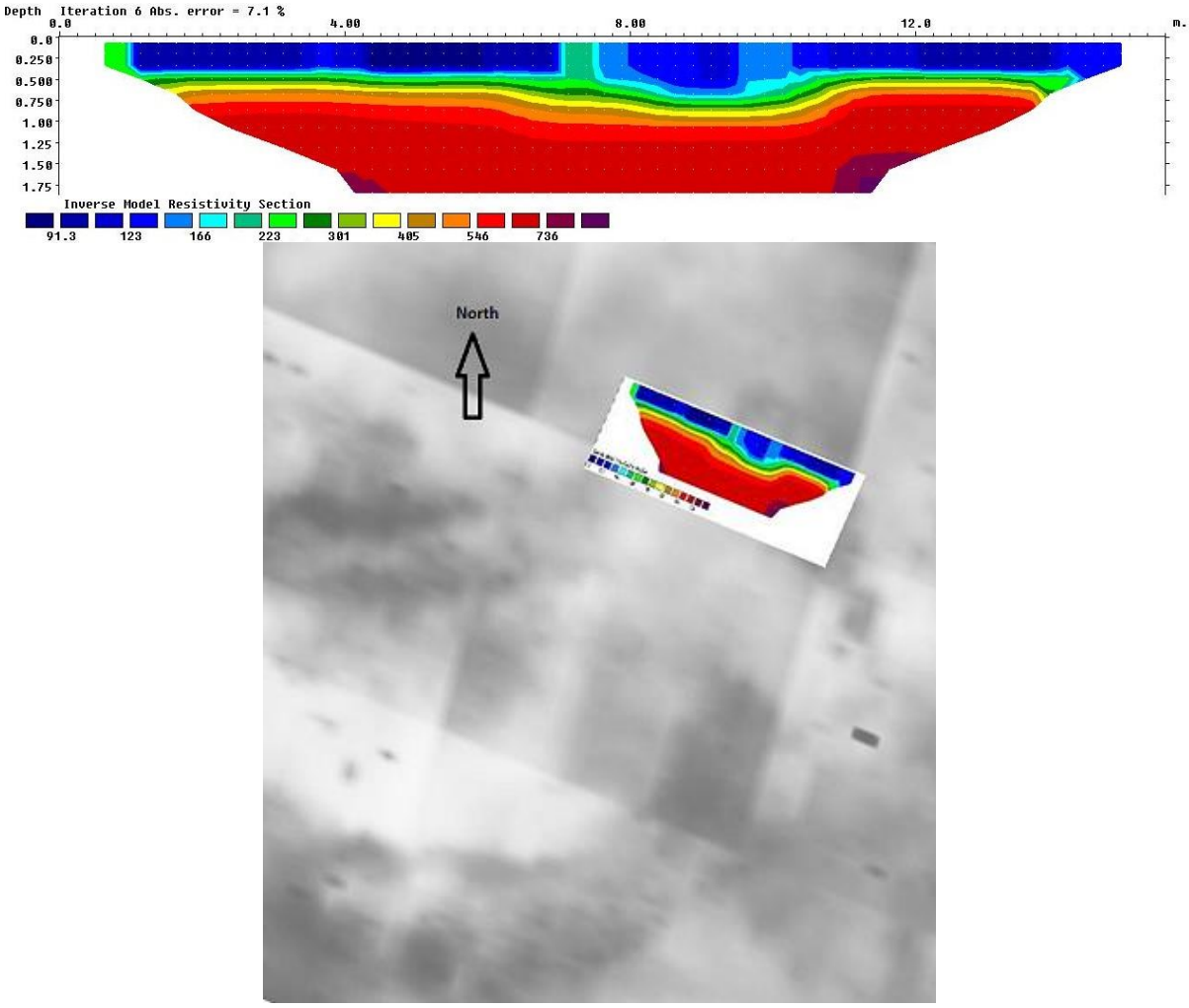

Figure 12 : Resistivity profile across stone cross mark

5.3.2 The Wansdyke

Figure 13 show the two profiles taken at 1m spacing across the possible Wansdyke ditch and bank.

The northern profile straddles the water pipe ditch at the western end which shows with a cut into the higher resistivity ground geology up to the 4m point. The Wansdyke ditch is then apparent between 9 and 13m with a straight sided ditch. The eastern edge of the bank is starting to show at about 25m. The depth of the ditch is confused by the lower resistance readings apparent at its bottom. Whether that is due to infill or problems with the profiling results is unclear.

The southern profile is even more puzzling as the profile ditch is barely apparent between 9 and 13m and then of very slightly lower resistance. The profile ditch is also misplaced from the resistivity survey position expected for the ditch. These results would need to be rechecked.

All the profile readings may be influenced by the high resistivity problem and would warrant further investigation.

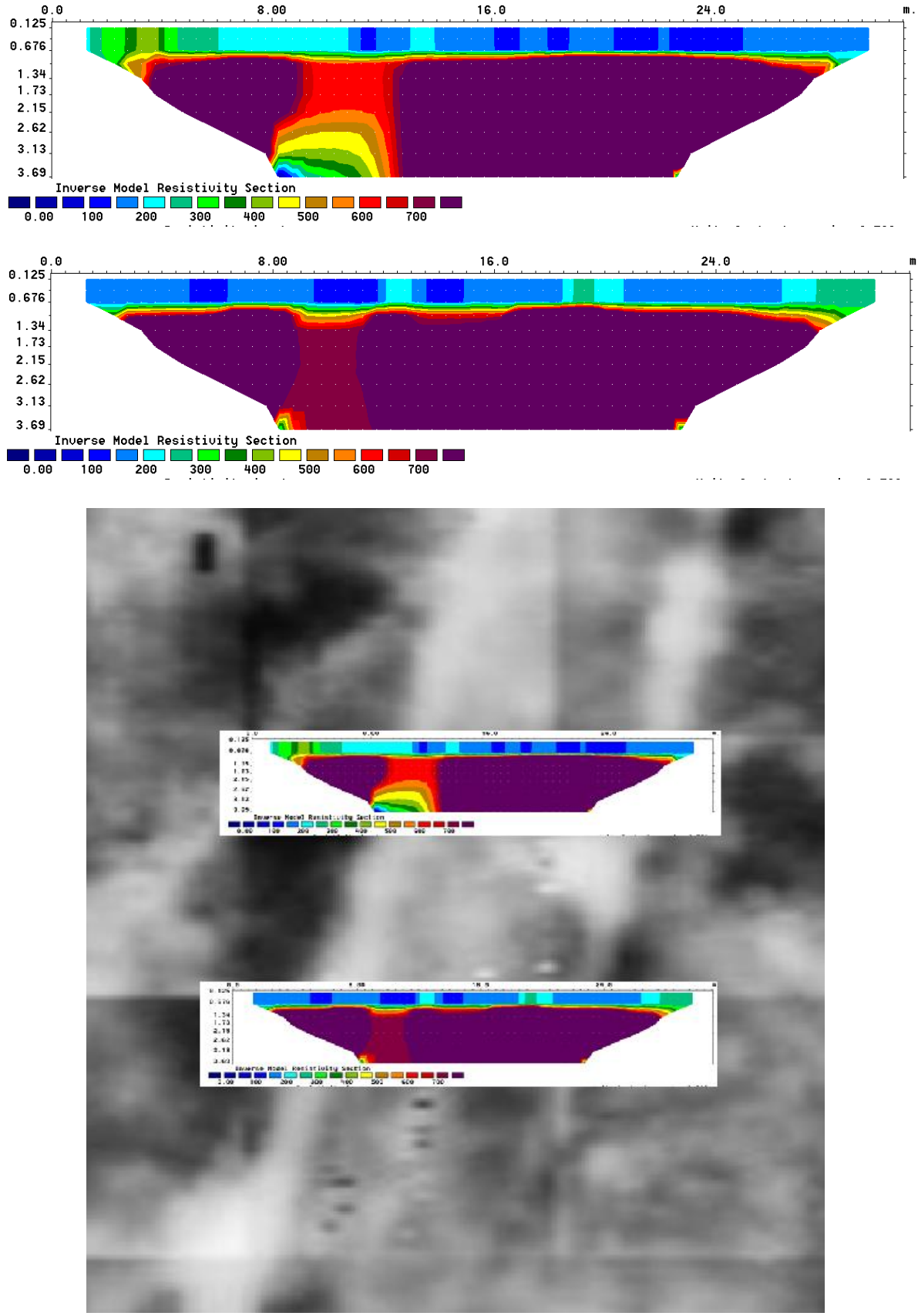

Figure 13 : Wansdyke profiles positioned on resistivity grid background

6 Comment and Conclusions

6.1 The Gothic Lodge and Ralph Allen's Monument

The Gothic Lodge was destroyed around 250 years ago and we are very fortunate to have drawings, first that by Thomas Robins shown in Fig 1 above but also another view of the building, complete with a ground floor plan and scale, shown in the margins of the Survey Map of Ralph Allen's Estates held in the Bath Record Office (Fig 14).

Figure 14 : Drawing and plan of The Lodge from Ralph Allen survey map

The Survey Map is undated and appears to be derived from other maps with the buildings shown indicating a date in the 1760s for its completion. The Lodge drawing on this map is similar to the Robins drawing showing the tower façade of the Lodge and confirming it was a substantial detached building with tower and two side extensions, one with likely front entrance door. A further extension is at the top of the plan but this has no access to the house. Approximate overall dimensions across the main house and the two side extensions are 23m and from top extension to the external wall of the tower 18m. The tower is 17m high and its outer wall, which we assume was retained for the Monument, 8m wide. It is recorded elsewhere that there were 75 steps to climb the tower.

There seems to be no correspondence between the two drawings of the Lodge and the outline shown in the Thorpe map of Bath from 1742 (Fig 15) although they are all likely to have been made within 20 years of each other. Thorpe shows the Lodge as an L shaped building with the front possibly facing south and looking towards North Road along an avenue of trees. There is another smaller building to the north-west.

The Ralph Allen survey map shows it as a single square building.

Figure 15 : The Lodge as shown on the Thorpe (left) and Ralph Allen Survey maps (copy by Mike Chapman)

Overlaying the results of the resistivity survey on the OS map gives us a position for the Monument to the north east of the higher resistance area of stone found in the southwest grids and about 10m south of the stone cross mark. With this arrangement a possible scenario for the Lodge position is outlined in Figure 16 by adding the Lodge footprint over the OS map and geophysics results.

The probable front entrance porch of the Lodge is facing south with the tower at the side covering the OS map position for the Monument. The main wall of the Lodge tower would become the east wall of the Monument. This Lodge outline and the other overlays are all shown to scale showing that the tower wall dimension from the survey map does approximately match the length of the Monument wall shown on the OS map.

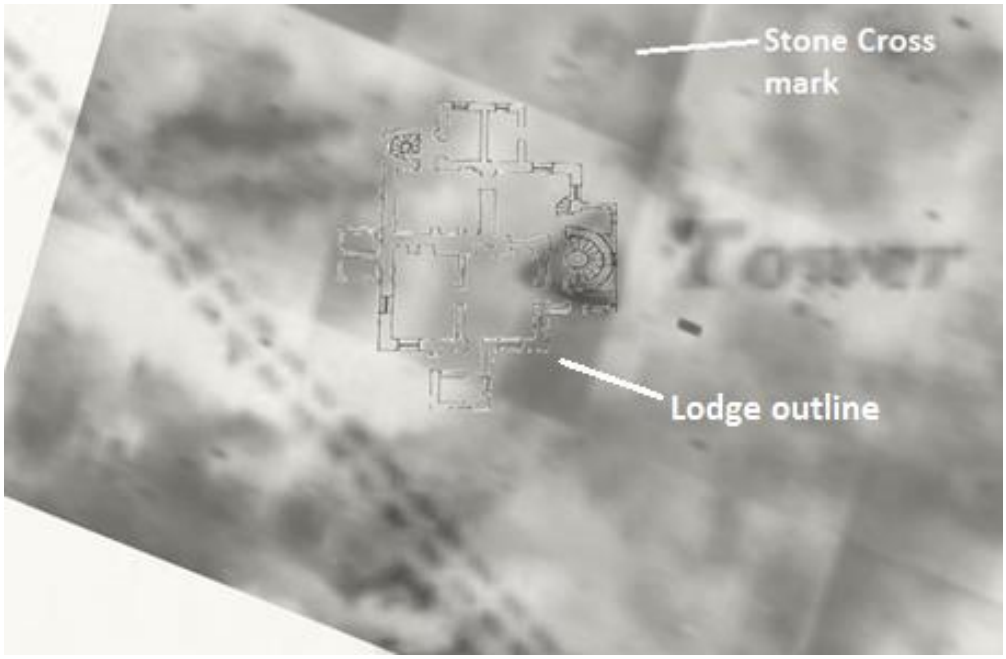

Figure 16 : Possible Lodge position on OS map and resistivity survey

Various photographs of the Monument exist showing the tower with its equilateral triangular base. As all three of the Monument walls look identical in these photos it is difficult to distinguish which is the original wall which might have been reused from the Lodge. The photos can however be used to validate the alignment of the Monument walls with the OS map and this confirms the east facing of the three walls looking out on a bearing of circa 80 degrees. The proposed position of the Lodge shown above in Fig 16 relates to this axis for the original back wall of the Lodge tower.

However the areas of higher resistance suggesting buried masonry do not match up with this Lodge position and represent an area larger than the Lodge footprint. This may be for a number of reasons such as the Monument position on the OS map being wrong, the demolition debris spread wide or limited geophysics results.

6.2 The Wansdyke

The western Wansdyke is generally accepted as running in a continuous line between Maes Knoll, south of Bristol and the Cross Keys at Odd Down, Bath and can be identified visibly or through crop marks along most of its length. No substantial evidence exists for the Wansdyke then crossing Claverton and Bathampton Downs to meet the next section at Bathford where the Bath-London Roman road agger and ditches are thought to have been used as the Wansdyke. This section of the Wansdyke utilising the Roman road was deduced from place name research along its route to Morgan's Hill.

The theory that the Wansdyke crossed from Odd Down to Bathford was largely promulgated by AF Major in his work during the 1920s. His hypothesis took the Wansdyke from Odd Down along various possible routes through Combe Down to

join ditches and banks south of Prior Park mansion and then through Monument Field (but to the west of the monument) to Bathampton iron age fort (now the Bath golf club course) before descending along the line of the stone tramway to Bathford.

Many of the features identified as the Wansdyke by Major were discredited by OGS Crawford, C & A Fox and A Clark in their separate works in the 1950s and the consensus now is that any continuation of the Wansdyke boundary followed the streams and rivers from Odd Down to Bathford; ie. Horsecombe Brook, Midford Brook and the River Avon to Bathford and the route east. The jury is still out on whether the Wansdyke was ever a continuous boundary along its whole length and the connection between the west, mid and east sections is therefore uncertain.

The Wansdyke is not mentioned for Prior Park in the Saxon boundary charter for 'Clifton' (later the parish of Widcombe/Lyncombe) as it does elsewhere on Odd Down and this suggests the Monument field earthwork came later. A characteristic feature of hunting parks was their division into compartments for different purposes, in this case particularly between the flat area of Claverton Down (ideal for the woodland groves and open 'laundes' suited to deer), separated by a 'deer-leap' bank and ditch from the valley of Widcombe (best suited for fowling and small game). Any bank and ditch used in this way would have had no legal significance and may explain why there is no written record of it and why it was ignored when the Bishop gave the valley over to the Prior in the 13th century. The two properties were then separated by the straight boundary wall we see today and this was adopted as the legal boundary between the Widcombe/Lyncombe and Claverton parishes.

Ten recorded excavations of the western Wansdyke between Maes Knoll and Bath have been made since 1969, mainly through watching briefs during the construction of roads and water mains. Ditch width and depth has varied in every case but has generally been found to be around 5.5m wide and 2.5m deep. The ditch was V shaped except on two occasions when U shaped.

Our findings from the profiles discussed in 5.3, although problematic and requiring further investigation, would suggest the ditch in Monument Field was unlike the other excavated parts of the Wansdyke near Bath by being at variance in width, depth, and/or shape. This could be explained by the ditch, and bank, being a new construction in mediaeval times as the deer barrier discussed above, or it could be an earlier construction, such as the Wansdyke, reworked more substantially for this new function.

6.3 Conclusions

None of the above of course explains what the stone cross mark was ! Only the separate smaller building shown in the Thorpe map may provide a clue to its existence for there is nothing in the ground plan of the Lodge that matches the cross outline. If the Lodge did exist where proposed the stone cross would clearly be a separate structure but there is no known record of a separate building standing adjacent to the Lodge or Monument, nor does it appear on any photographs.

It is very probable that the Lodge must have stood in the vicinity of the Monument position on the OS map but, as no building outline can be observed in the geophysics, further evidence would require targeted excavation to find what elements survive and provide a clearer picture of the layout and exact position. Excavation may also point to whether the Lodge was developed from an earlier

building and should also include inspection of the stone cross mark. The three circular areas of higher resistance in the south of the Lodge area may also warrant excavation to find their origins.

The Wansdyke could be further investigated by resistivity profiling to confirm/refute the findings already made above and to profile at other points along its length shown as the Wansdyke on the OS map. This should include places to the north of the Bishop/Priors' Park boundary where any later excavation to create a deer barrier would not have occurred. Excavation of the ditch might provide dating evidence and visibility of the types of infill that may have taken place as use of the land moved from deer park through agriculture to school playing field.

7 Related reading

A Guide to the Estates of Ralph Allen around Bath, Mike Chapman, Survey of Old Bath, 1996.

Clark, A. 1958 The Nature of Wansdyke, Antiquity XXXII, pp 89-96

Crawford, OGS. 1953. Archaeology in the Field

Fox, C and A. 1958. Archaeological Journal.

Major, A.F. 1924. The Course of Wansdyke through Somerset, in Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society Proceedings, vol. LXX, pp.22-37.

Major, A.F. and Burrow, E.J. 1926. The Mystery of Wansdyke. Cheltenham

Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society 1904. Proceedings, vol.LX, pp. k-L & 63- 65.

West Wansdyke Conservation Management Plan, 2015

Appendix A

1 Base Point

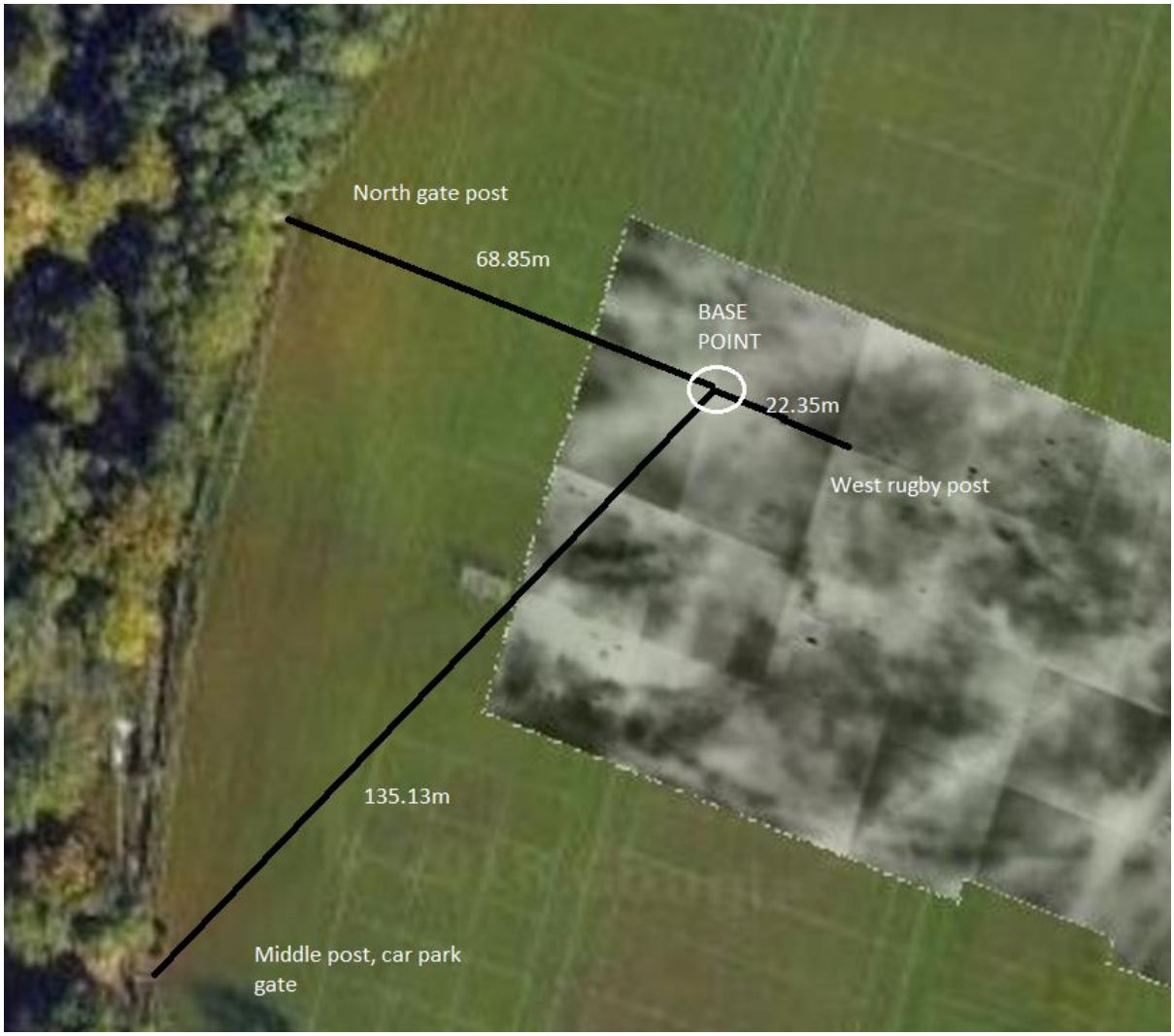

Figure 17 : Grid Base Point

The base point for the grids was set at the SW corner of the marked rugby field at the point where the pitch touch lines met. This point was 22.35m from the west rugby post (with fixed foundation hole) at the marked pitch edge and the grids were continued past the rugby post along the touch line on the same bearing of 104 degrees as shown in Fig 17. The base point was also measured from the two field gates.

2 Grid Layout

The order in which each of the 30 grids of 20m was carried out is shown in Figure 18 with TR/CIA meter grids shown in green, RM meter in orange. All measurements were started from the south west corner of each grid, as shown by the example white point in Grid 1, and ending in the south east corner.

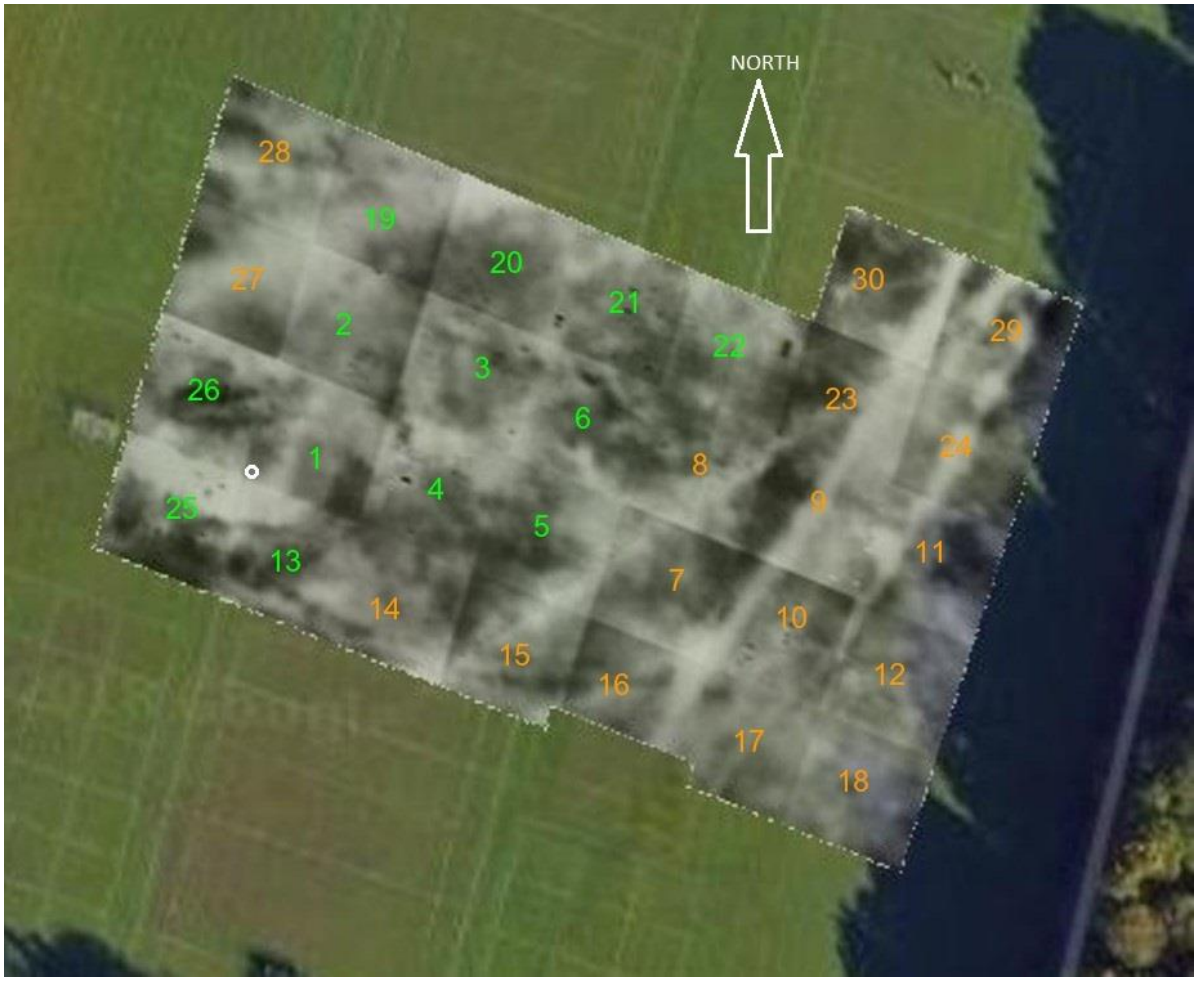

Figure 18 : Grid Numbering

3 Resistivity Profile Positions

The left hand probe (Probe 0) positions for each profile were as follows and refer to grids shown in Fig 15.

1. 5m east, 5m north of SW corner of grid 2, 0.5m spacing, horizontally across into grid 3
2. NW corner of grid 9, 1m spacing, horizontally across into grid 11
3. NW corner of grid 10, 1m spacing, horizontally across into grid 12

Details shown in yellow in Fig 19

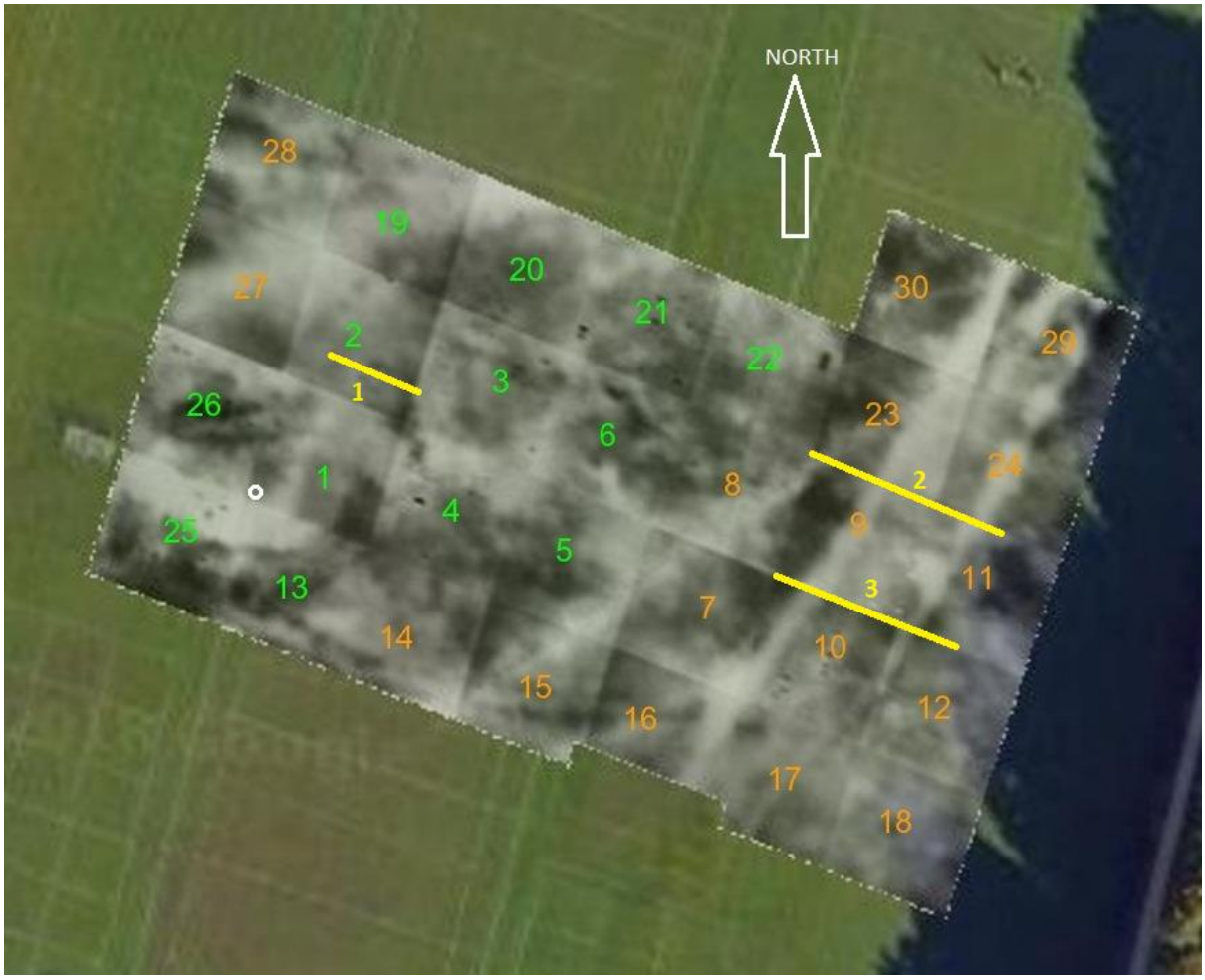

Figure 19 : Resistivity profile positions