

AARGnews

The newsletter of the Aerial Archaeology Research Group

Offprint from
Number 43 September 2011



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Happy Lands Enclosure at Wiggold, Ampney Crucis, Gloucestershire

Bob Bewley¹ and Tim Darvill

Serendipity plays such an enormous part in the world of archaeology, and especially in aerial reconnaissance. An e-mail from Tim asked if I happened to be doing any flying and, if so, would I look at this site, which I had been keeping an eye on for him. By chance I was able to fly over the site, during the excavations, and on the same day that there was a geophysical survey on site—testing new kit. The reason for publishing it here is that when I popped in to see the excavations I realised that the site was visible because of the promoted growth of dock weed (*Rumex crispus* or *obtusifolius*); not a plant known for its crop-mark potential, but everyone knows “dock leaves”, for their healing properties – having been stung by nettles. If you look closely you can just see the edge of the enclosing ditch in the wheat crop (top). The farmer had obviously cordoned the area off (before sowing his wheat) so that excavations could take place in June.

The site was first recorded as a ring-ditch by O.G.S. Crawford on 19 May 1931 while travelling by train along a now-defunct line. The enclosure is about 60m by 45m and is being investigated as part of the Wiggold Prehistoric Landscape Project led by Tim Darvill of Bournemouth University. Excavations in June 2011 suggested a two-phase development, with a pair of small concentric ditches, the outer of which was recut around the west side as a massive rock-cut boundary ditch 2m deep and about 3m wide. The site is not securely dated yet, but geophysical surveys suggest that parts of the ditch circuit are causewayed. Other sites discovered in the area include two three-sided Bronze Age enclosures, one dated through excavation to the Middle Bronze Age, and a previously unrecognized Neolithic long barrow. Further details at: <http://eprints.bournemouth.ac.uk/6212/> and in Professor Darvill’s recently published book *Prehistoric Gloucestershire* (Amberley Press, 2011)

The strange contraption on the back of the Land Rover is an array for geophysical survey, being undertaken by staff from the Römisch-Germanische Kommission of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut in Frankfurt using a 16-sensor SynSys Gradiometer, pulled by a Land Rover. The system provides readings at 25cm intervals at a transect spacing of 25cm and, with GPS georeferencing, provides rapid high resolution surveys.

Photo by Bob Bewley. May 31st 2011



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