

**YCCCART 2024/Y10**

**Geophysical survey and site recording at Rose Cottage, Kingston Seymour**

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RESEARCH TEAM (YCCCART)**

*General Editor: Vince Russett*



Surviving standing gable wall of Rose Cottage against the local lane

*'Houses live and die: there is a time for building  
And a time for living and for generation  
And a time for the wind to break the loosened pane  
And shake the wainscot where the field-mouse trots'  
- T S Eliot East Coker*

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## **Abstract**

*Rose Cottage (name from the OS 2nd Epoch map) was a farmstead off of Ham Lane, Kingston Seymour, typical of the dispersed settlement of the Northmarsh. It currently consists of a standing gable wall in the hedge against the lane, with the earthworks and rubble heaps of a dwelling abandoned some time in the years around 1900. There are some slight hints that its origins may be earlier than the probable pre-1800 of the cartographical and documentary evidence.*

## **Acknowledgements**

A Heritage Lottery Grant enabled the purchase, by YCCCART, of a Geoscan RM 15 resistivity meter without which this survey could not have been undertaken.

This survey would also not have been carried out without the willing permission of the landowner, Mr Mike Wallis.

Richard Pearson produced and interpreted the lidar data; Jane Bell provided the 1821 map and various contacts in the parish, as well as discussions of the history of Kingston. Pete English nobly stepped up to help clear briar clumps that had developed over the site of the dwelling.

The authors are grateful for the hard work by the members of YCCCART in performing the surveys and Vince Russett for editing.

As always, the staff of the Somerset Heritage Centre have been very helpful with providing documentary and cartographic material.

## **Introduction**

Yatton, Congresbury, Claverham and Cleeve Archaeological Research Team (YCCCART) is a Community Archaeology team working across northern Somerset.

Our objective is to undertake archaeological fieldwork to enable a better understanding and management of the heritage of the area while recording and publishing the activities and locations of the research carried out.

## Site location



Fig 1: Site SW of Kingston village

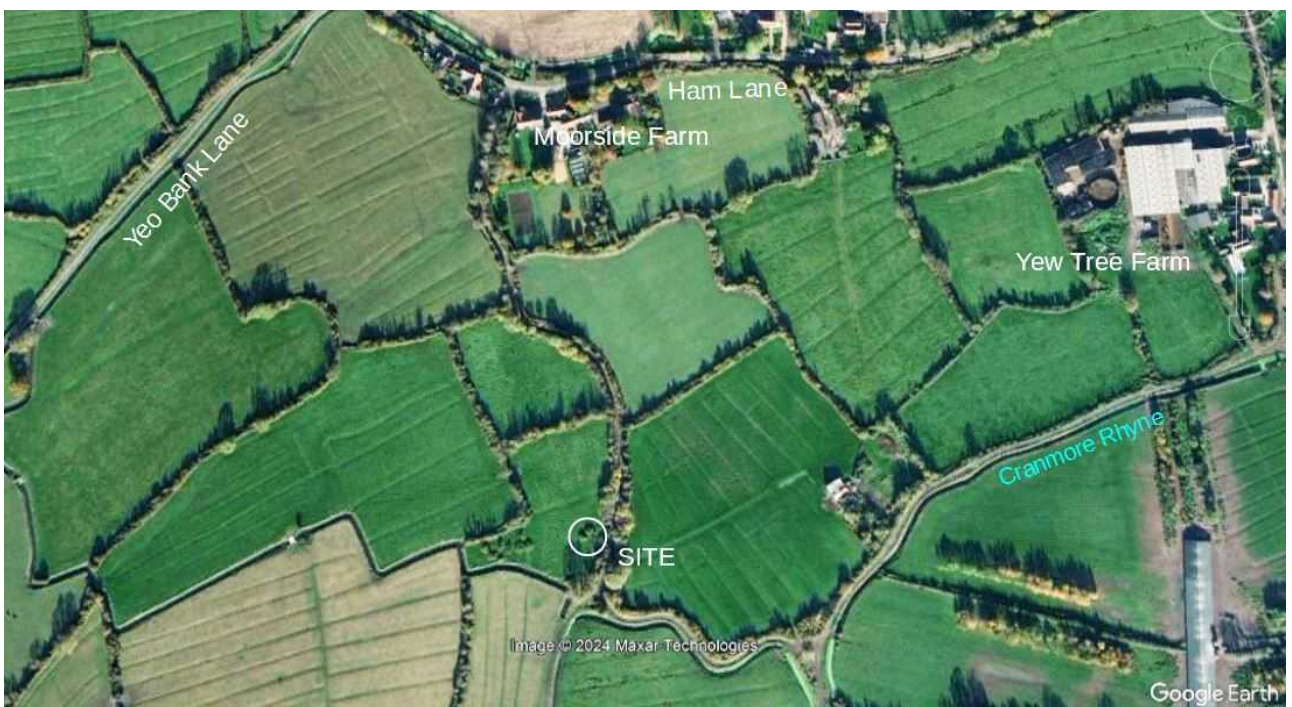


Fig 2: Site location detail

The site lies beside a lane (no longer named) running south from Ham Lane in the parish of Kingston Seymour in the unitary authority of North Somerset, and lies at ST3930866184. Kingston village is approximately 4km south of Clevedon, and alongside

the M5 motorway (although there is no direct access to the village from the M5).

### **Land use and geology**

The site is on a very subtly higher area than the surrounding Northmarsh, which is itself an area of Tidal Flat Deposits of the alluvial clays. Virtually all of Kingston parish is no higher than 6m AOD, which is below the level of many high tides. This entails large sea defence banks and most fields (including the site field) have deep grypes serving to drain the clays as quickly as possible, as they can rapidly become boggy in wet periods.

The site lies immediately adjacent to a bridleway (along the adjacent lane), and early maps show at least 2 footpaths converging immediately south of the site (see Fig 4 below), although these are no longer extant.

The site, which is used as permanent pasture, is private with no public access, but a careful look at the laneside hedge will reveal the gable end wall of the former house, still standing to c2m height.

## Historical & archaeological context

Kingston Seymour is a typical Northmarsh parish, although its landscape is far better preserved than most. It has a known Roman landscape buried deeply by post-Roman alluviation. This in itself lies on the post-glacial alluvial deposits of the Northmarsh (see Appendix 3).

It is also a parish of dispersed settlement (as is most of North Somerset), with little or no development of 'typical' nucleated villages and massive medieval open fields. There were 'common fields' in Kingston, but these were small and most likely late developments, since they are largely close to the sea. This means that Rose Cottage was never as isolated as it seems today: the contrast of the road surface of Ham Lane, with that of the lane leading to Rose Cottage, is a relatively recent one: various ordinances against keeping sheep or storing hay on the roads in the local 18th century CE Court proceedings show this well.

The earliest documentary reference to Rose Cottage so far known is on the OS 1st edition map of 1810 (Fig 3 below). This shows a building on the current site: the nature of the pre-industrial mortar in the standing wall, and a couple of hints from finds at the site (see below) imply that the site (and possibly the building) is older, although precise evidence is lacking.



*Fig 3: A feature (arrowed) is shown on this 1810 OS First draft map, close to the named Burnt House (British Library)*

The first clear indication of the site is on the 1821 parish map of Kingston (Fig 4). This clearly shows (red colouration) a long dwelling with front and back porches, possibly two rooms on either side of a cross-passage.



*Fig 4a & 4b: Rose Cottage from 1821 map, and enlarged view of the same (per Jane Bell).*

Adjacent at the south-western end is a small outbuilding (hatched on the map). Note, the current standing wall is already in place, surprisingly close to the ditch against the lane.

The 1846 Tithe Map and the Tithe Apportionment show the buildings (less clearly than the earlier map: the porches are not shown, but are certainly there later - see below).



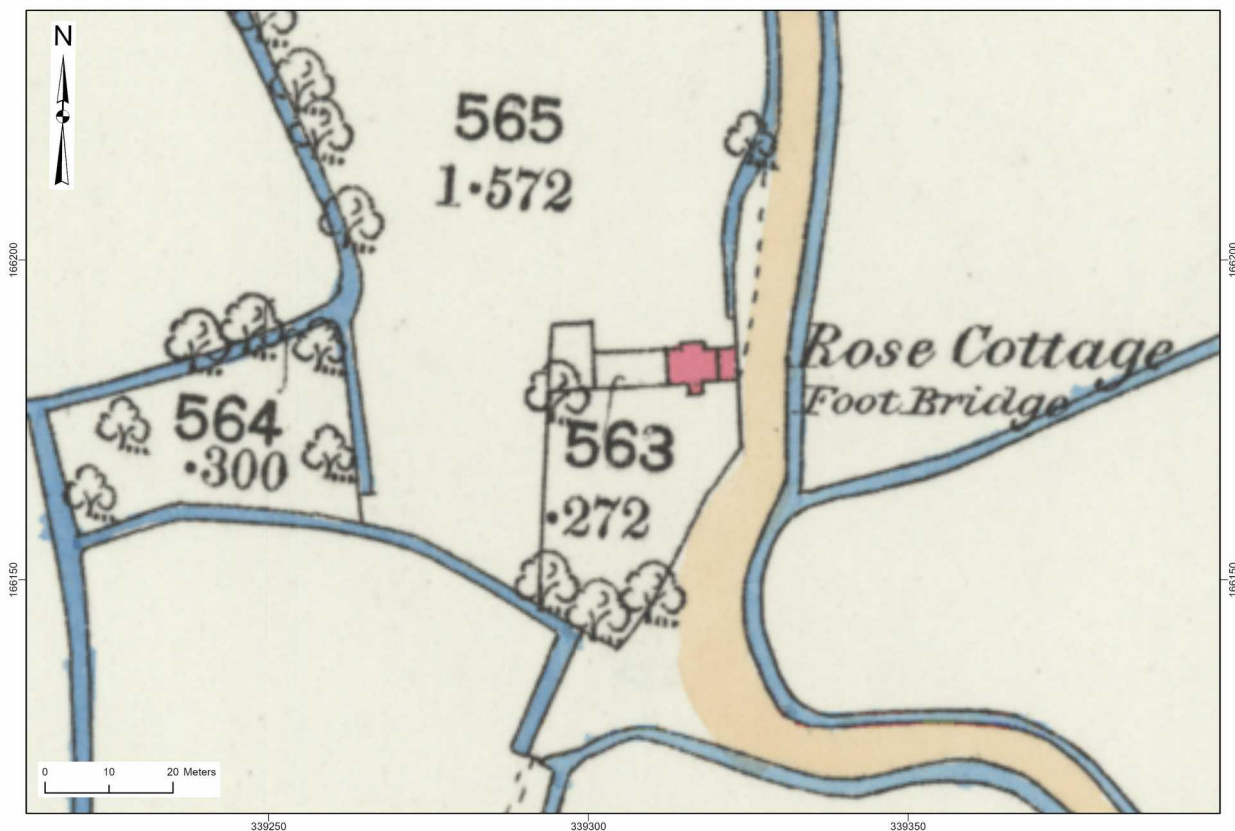
*Fig 5: Rose Cottage site from the Tithe Map (1846)*

It also shows that the site was owned by one Samuel Rawlings (his only possession in Kingston) and tenanted, with a garden, by Elizabeth Pearson, the whole being 1 rood 2 perches (0.64 Ha) in size (but see below).

The quality of this map is poor.

Elizabeth also rented seven other fields from a different owner, one William Eddington: 19 acres 0 roods and 19 perches (7.75 Ha) immediately adjacent to the house in six grounds, and a seventh of 2 acres 2 roods 11 perches (1.05 Ha) of pasture half a mile east at Cranmoor near the Yatton boundary. Such detached parcels of land are not uncommon in this area (see, for example, Stephen Rippon's plotting of the land holdings relating to farms in Wick St Lawrence - Rippon 2006).

Rose Cottage - Kingston Seymour - 1st Edition OS



*Fig 6: Coloured version of OS Epoch 1 map (c1885) (National Library of Scotland per Richard Pearson)*

The 1885 OS plan shows Rose Cottage at its apparent fullest extent.

This version confirms by coloration that the area towards the lane is the dwelling, but if its internal division is correct, the porches seem to give direct access to one room, and this is unlikely to form a cross passage. Unfortunately, unless there had been substantial rebuilding between 1846 and 1885 (which of course, is not impossible) this cannot be resolved with current information.

The open structures to the left (west) of the building are presumably outbuildings. The 'Foot Bridge' shown opposite appears to be the last remnant of one of the footpaths depicted on the 1821 plan (Fig 4 above).

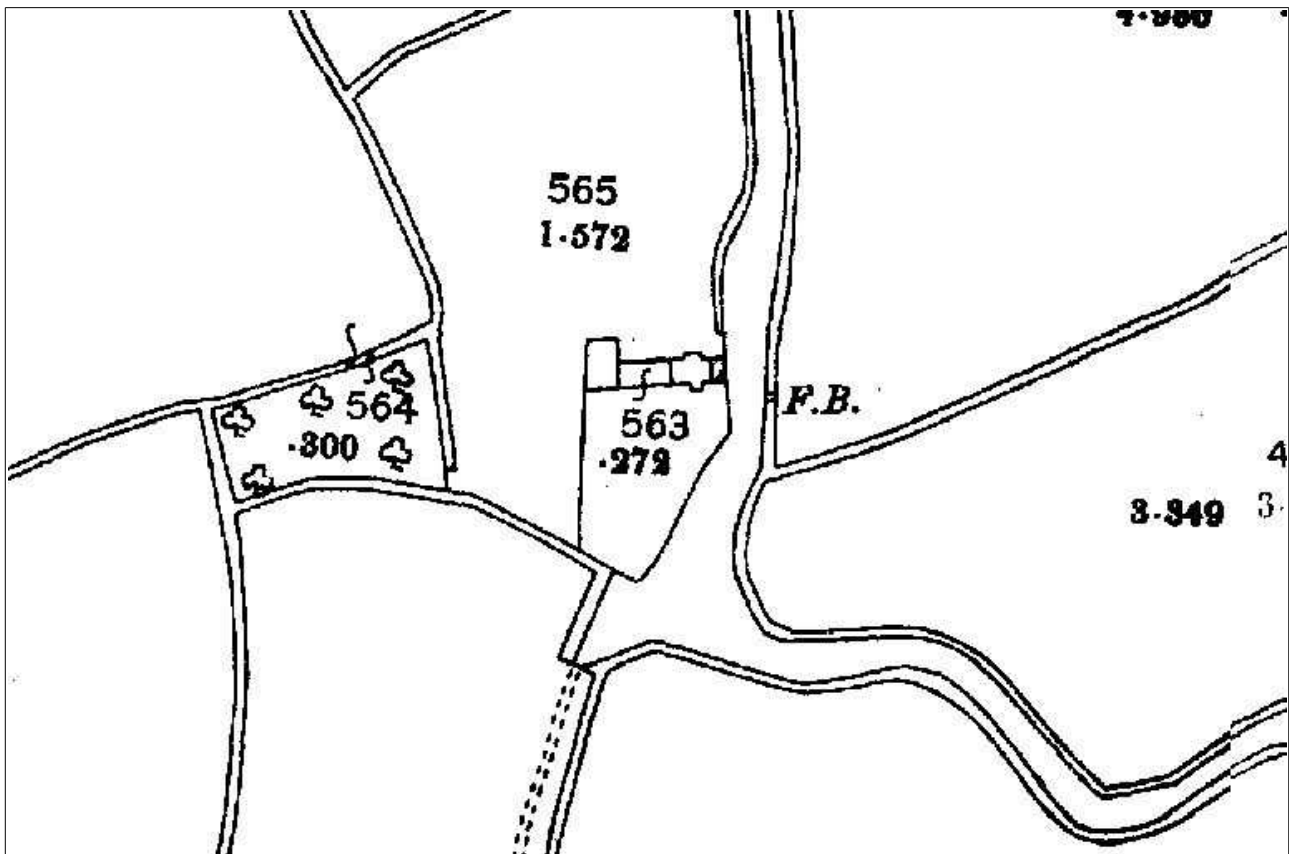


Fig 7: OS Epoch 2 plan (c1900)

Probably the latest known plan of the site is on the Epoch 2 OS plan (Fig 7 above). This would seem to imply through the hatching that only the section of the building against the lane (where the standing wall survives) was roofed at this date. This would not be inconsistent with the deep recession in agriculture in the late 19th century (YCCCART 2019, for example), which resulted in the abandonment or dereliction of many marginal sites, and Rose Cottage may have been one victim of this. Its position would have come to seem more marginal (as it seems today) as road transport became easier and more focussed on villages, not individual farmsteads.

No photographs of the site are currently known (*pers comm* Jane Bell).



## **Survey objectives**

The survey was undertaken during the unsettled summer and early autumn of 2024, primarily to attempt to understand the development and abandonment of a typical farmstead in this dispersed settlement area.

## **Methodology**

The survey of the fields was undertaken during the period July to September 2024 by teams from YCCCART using a Geoscan RM-15 resistivity meter.

The completed survey was downloaded to the TerraSurveyor programme and the resultant composite adjusted using the following filters:

Band weight equaliser  
Grad shade  
Despiked  
Clip SD2  
High Pass filter.

The recording of the standing wall was by rectified photography using natural light and subsequent illustration in Libre Office 5 Draw.

The report was written in Libre Office 5 Writer.

Photographs were taken by members of YCCCART, and remain the copyright of YCCCART.

Before works could be carried out, areas of brambles were cleared, initially by hand, but more effectively, with brushcutter and peek (pitchfork) during August and September 2024.

## Results

### Remote sensing

Lidar surveys of the site and its environs at 25cm resolution were downloaded and processed by Richard Pearson. This enabled a fuller understanding of the historic uses of the site and its surroundings.

Initial 1m resolution surveys indicated the potential of the earthworks at the site:



*Fig 8: Rose Cottage site (lidar 1m resolution)*

This showed that under the bramble clumps, an earthwork survived reflecting the previous buildings on the site. Fig 8 (above) shows the minimal topographic variation of the area (total c 1.3m at greatest): the drainage grypes in all the adjacent fields show as cyan and blue coloration: the cottage site is the only area in the vicinity where the absolute height rises above 6.4m AOD, implying a collapsed structure.

The higher resolution lidar clarifies the picture slightly. The earthwork representing the collapsed buildings is clearer in Fig 9 (largely as clumps of brambles in the centre!): this also shows the corrugated nature of the 'garden' to the south of the dwelling.

This almost certainly relates to use as an orchard at some past time (the fruit trees are grown on the raised areas to prevent waterlogging of the roots, while the gullies help to drain the area). The 'Young Orchard' immediately west of the dwelling also has these ridges, and a couple of trees survive there.

Rose Cottage - Kingston Seymour - 25cm lidar - Sky View Factor



Fig 9: 25 cm resolution lidar (Sky View) showing orchard earthworks and dwelling site (© Environment Agency copyright and/or database right 2016. All rights reserved. per Richard Pearson)

A profile across the 'garden' area shows the ridges, which run parallel to the east ditch of the garden. It is entirely possible that this was a plum orchard: plums currently thrive in the soil conditions at Kingston, and there are several plants in the east and west hedges of the plot which have a small sweet fruit which may be a hybrid with the local *Prunus spinosa* (sloe). For further lidar information, see Appendix 4.

Air photographs for the site are unfortunately, almost universally poor: recent photographs from Google Earth History simply show the persistence of the bramble cover: earlier photographs (such as the RAF 1940s cover) show the vague outline of the outbuildings to the west end of the site, but the scale is too small (and the detail overexposed) for any further useful information.

### Resistivity survey

The survey was carried out in two main sessions in late July and early September (largely determined by availability of operatives and the poor weather of August: see Appendix 1).

The site looked as below (Fig 10) in late July 2024:



*Fig 10: Site before bramble clearance, from west: the brambles are mainly growing on rubble piles from building collapse / demolition*

Once the brambles had been cleared, the geophysical survey examined three grids more or less trending N-S, with the central over the mapped buildings. Because of the exceptionally dry conditions, results over the building were unsatisfactory, and the grid was resurveyed together with the half-grid between it and the upstanding trackside wall (see Appendix 1).

The full resistance survey is included in Fig 11. The uppermost and lowest grids show typical alluvial signals, with very low resistance.

The central grids lie directly over the mapped remains of the building. As can be seen from Fig 12, with an overlay of OS building outlines over the resistivity results, much of the outline of the buildings is obscured by the very high resistance of rubble piles within, and to the south of, the known buildings.

These rubble piles imply that the dwelling was (as might be expected) a stone building: the far smaller area of high resistance in the area of the western 'barn' probably implies that this was not.

Grid B2 reflects the high resistance of the rubble fallen from the surviving gable wall (including the visible collapse in the centre of the wall in mid-2024).

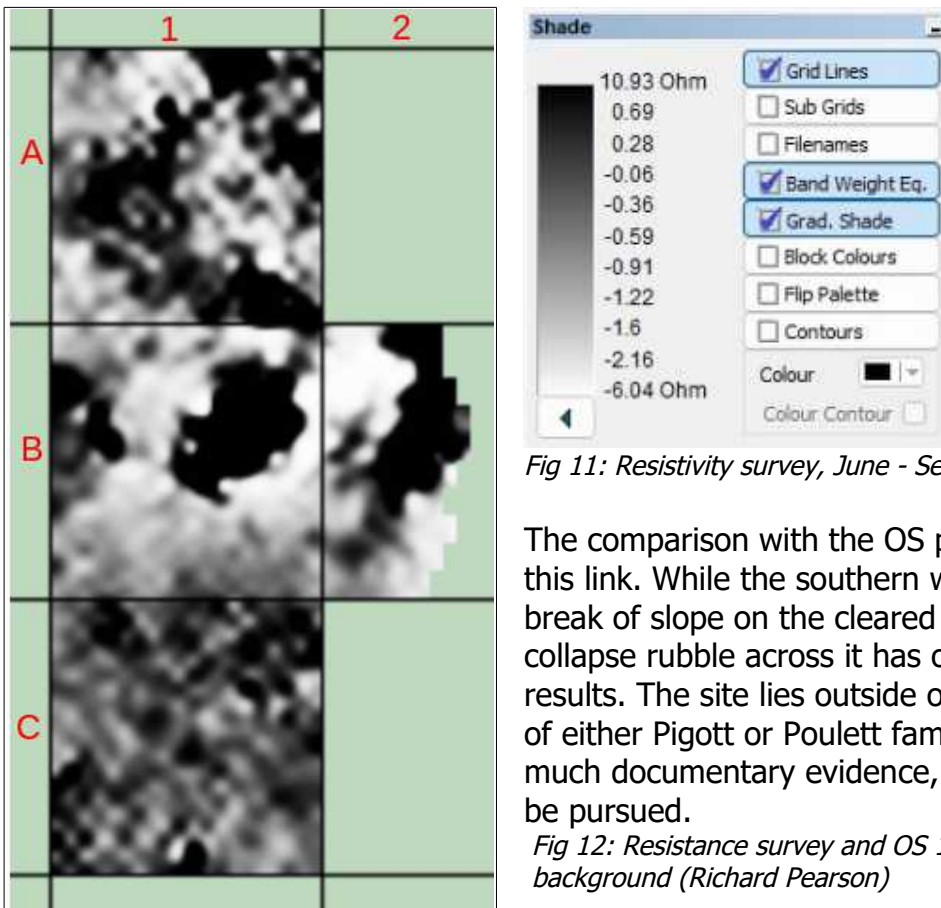
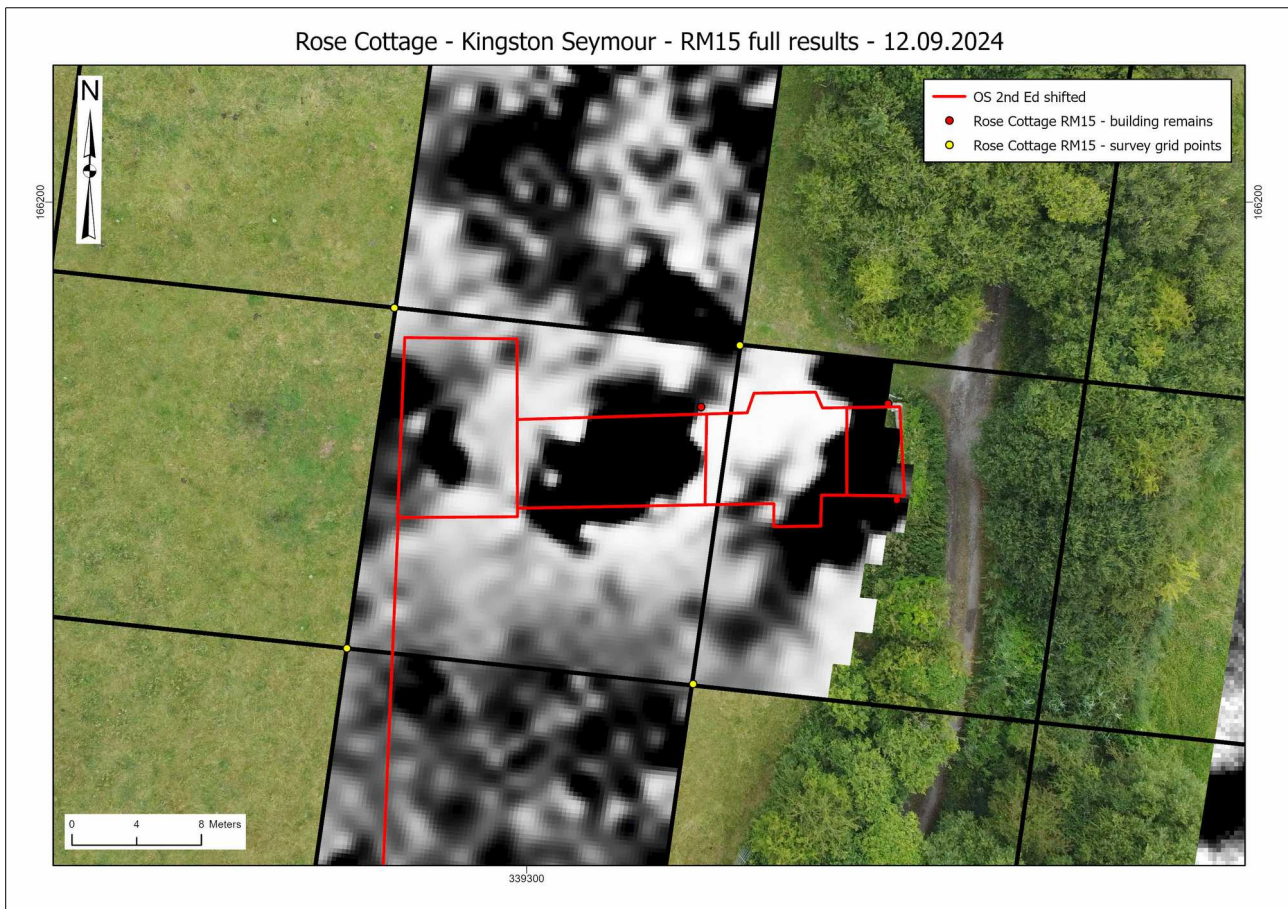


Fig 11: Resistivity survey, June - September 2024

The comparison with the OS plan (Fig 12) illustrates this link. While the southern wall line is visible as a break of slope on the cleared ground, the spread of collapse rubble across it has obscured the resistivity results. The site lies outside of the known ownership of either Pigott or Poulett families, and thus lacks much documentary evidence, but this also needs to be pursued.

Fig 12: Resistance survey and OS 1885 plan with drone photo background (Richard Pearson)



Kingston Seymour, Geophysical survey and site recording, Rose Cottage, 2024, Y10, v 1

## The standing structures

The site (including the trackside wall) was covered in clumps of bramble growth, largely where there was rubble below. These were cleared before works could begin. The north wall of the building could be traced as a series of protruding foundation stones for around 4 -5m: a large square block of Triassic Limestone standing in the field seems to have been used as a corner stone in the construction.

The trackside wall still stands to a height of c2m, and is 5.5m (c 18 feet) long to the corners of the north and south returns (see cover illustration and Fig 13 below).



*Fig 13: The trackside wall (west elevation)*

Only the west elevation was available for recording: the east (track side) is covered in a heavy growth of mature ivy, which is stabilising the wall structure.

The wall is mostly composed of coursed Pennant Sandstone, set in an off-white mortar (2.5Y 9/1) with abundant rounded sand (probably washed sea sand). This was covered on the interior of the room by a very pale yellowy plaster (10YR 9/2) which in places was decorated with a splashing of painted pale red ochre (10R 6/3): see Appendix 2 Finds. Both are likely pre-industrial, with no sign of the conspicuous charcoal / coal fragments usually found in mortars later than c 1800.

The centre of the face of the wall has collapsed at some time: there is no trace of sooting in or below the wall, so it is not a collapsed fireplace, and the thickness (19-20"; c50cm) is maintained across the whole width of the wall (the plan of this on Fig 14 is slightly conventionalised, since the east elevation was not recorded - above - it is based on a number of measured widths of the wall along its length).

The development of the site since c1800 is shown in Fig 15 below:

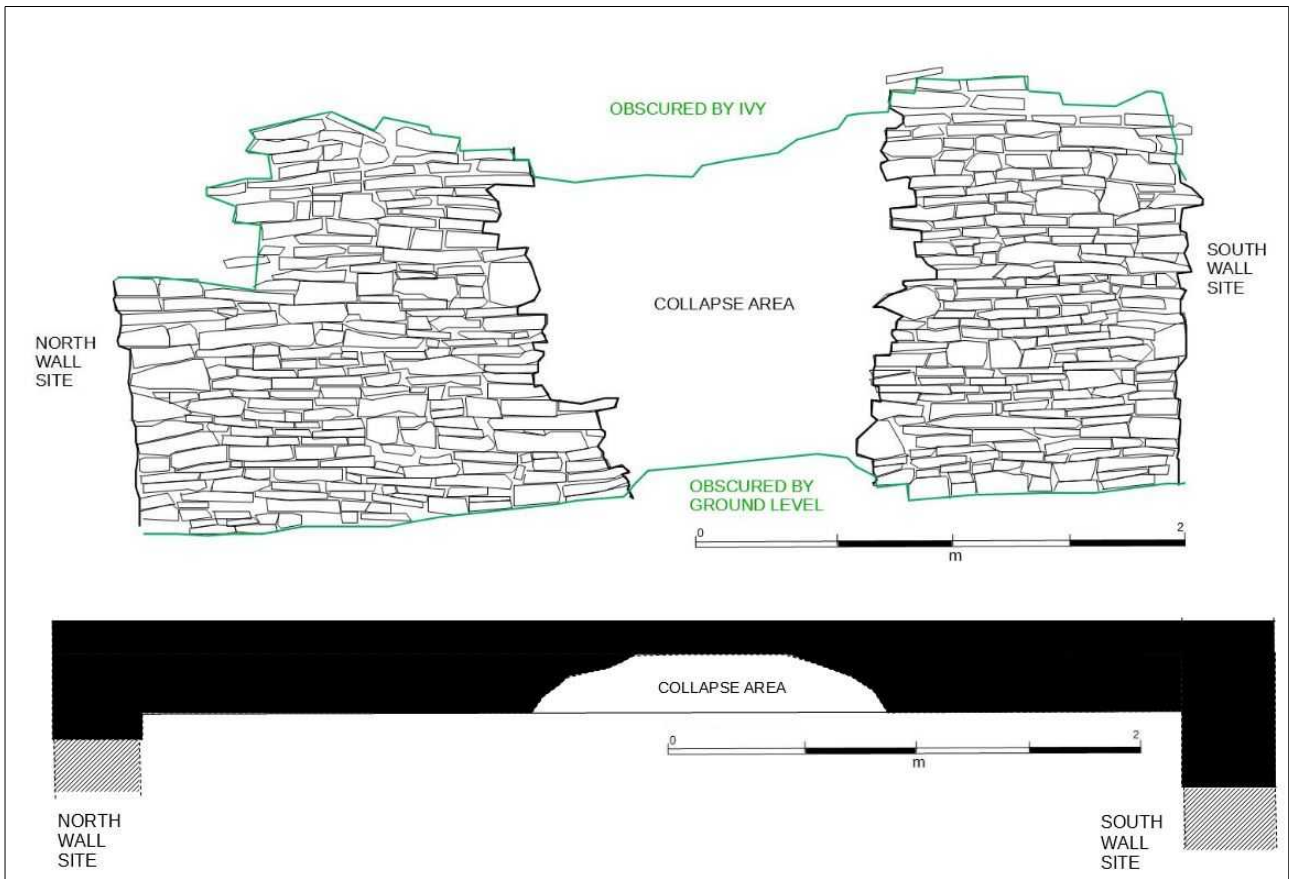


Fig 14: West elevation and plan of the trackside wall

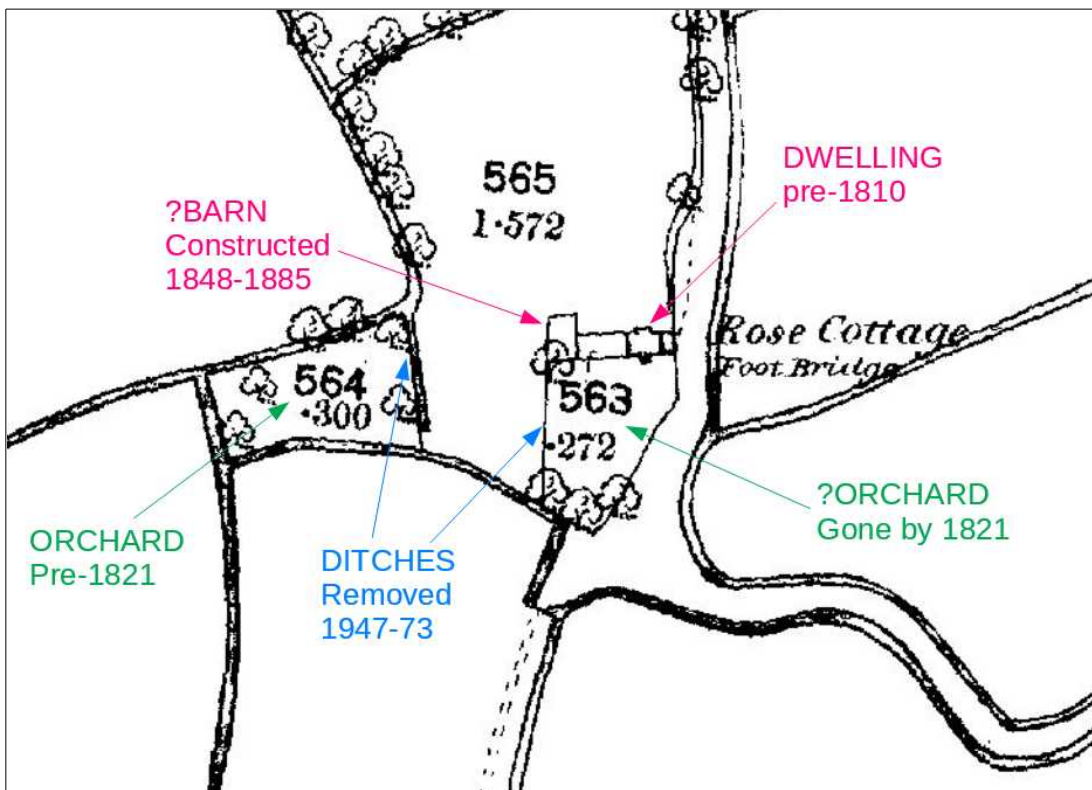


Fig 15: Summary of Rose Cottage area developments (basemap OS 1885)

A summary of results from Rose Cottage is given in Fig 15: it should be borne in mind that some elements of this study (slightly raised topography; pre-industrial mortars; sparse finds of pre-1800 pottery) may imply earlier settlement at the site, but this needs to be investigated further.



## Recommendations for further work

Further documentary work may reveal more about the site, which appears to arise from the abandonment and collapse of a farmstead, probably in the late 19th or earliest 20th century. Its origins are still not clear.

## References

Rippon, S. 2006	<i>Landscape, Community and Colonisation. The North Somerset Levels during the 1st to 2nd millennia AD.</i> CBA Research Report 152. Council for British Archaeology
YCCART 2019	<i>Archaeological observations at Iwood Farm, Congresbury, 2018-19</i> Available at <a href="http://yccart.co.uk">yccart.co.uk</a>

## Authors

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*with*

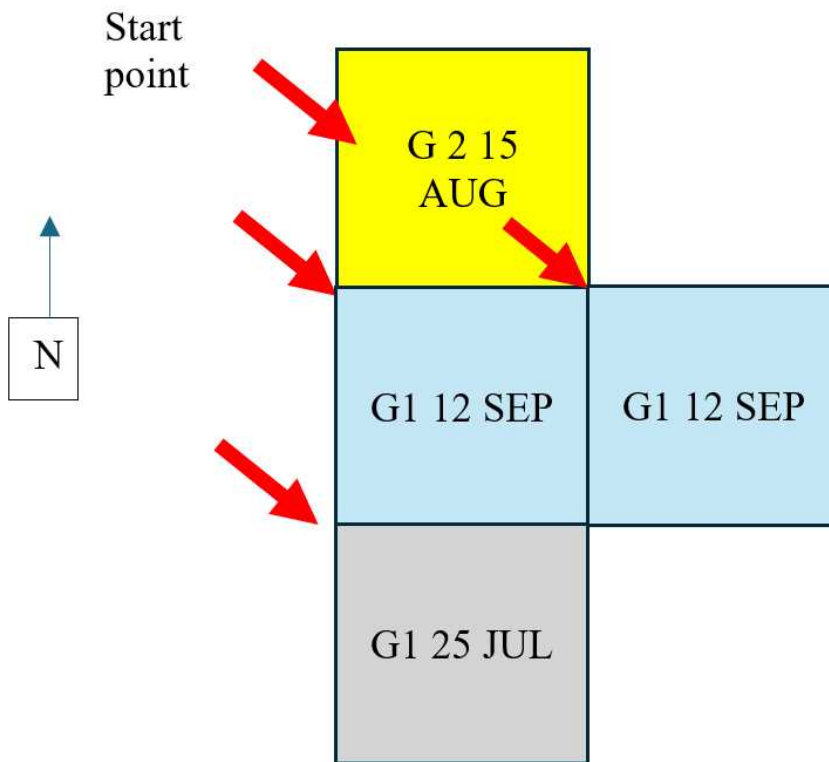
Jane Bell  
Richard Pearson  
Chris Short

## Date

2024-09-17

## Appendix 1 Day Sheet extracts

Date	Number of grids	Grid size	Direction of survey
25 July	1	20 x 20m	EAST
15 Aug	2	20 x 20 m	EAST
12 Sep	2	G1 – 20 x 20m ( <i>Repeat of grid 1 15 Aug</i> ) G2 – 20 x 12m appx	EAST



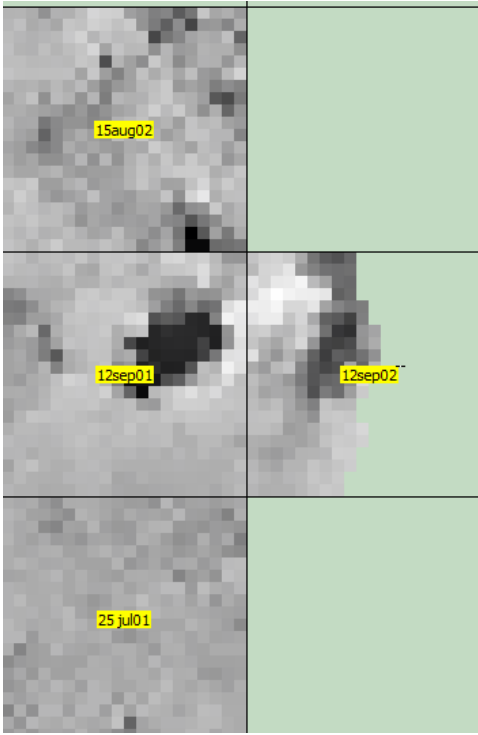
Grid layout

Rose Cottage - Kingston Seymour - Grid coordinates



	A	B	C	D
Survey	Point	Easting	Northing	
Rose Cottage RM15	A	339286.80	166154.34	
Rose Cottage RM15	B	339289.59	166174.09	
Rose Cottage RM15	C	339292.33	166193.87	
Rose Cottage RM15	D	339295.22	166213.64	
Rose Cottage RM15	E	339297.98	166233.55	
Rose Cottage RM15	F	339318.04	166231.29	
Rose Cottage RM15	G	339315.30	166211.52	
Rose Cottage RM15	H	339312.35	166191.68	
Rose Cottage RM15	I	339309.64	166172.01	
Rose Cottage RM15	J	339306.66	166152.13	

GPS



TerraSurveyor grids

## Appendix 2: Finds

A few finds were made in soil disturbed by rabbits after bramble clearance.



*Brass thimble, tiny in size (16mm at opening); probably a child's toy (or thimble for use with extraordinarily small hands).*

The thimble has iron scale on its closed end, possibly post-burial. As machine-made, it is datable only as 'industrial' i.e. post-1780.

Also found in the same disturbance, a few fragments of pottery (not illustrated).

1 tiny frag late med. cooking pot (<1cm).

1 small sherd 17thc East Somerset internally glazed jar.

2 small frags CBM (brick)

1 frag blue and white transfer ware plate

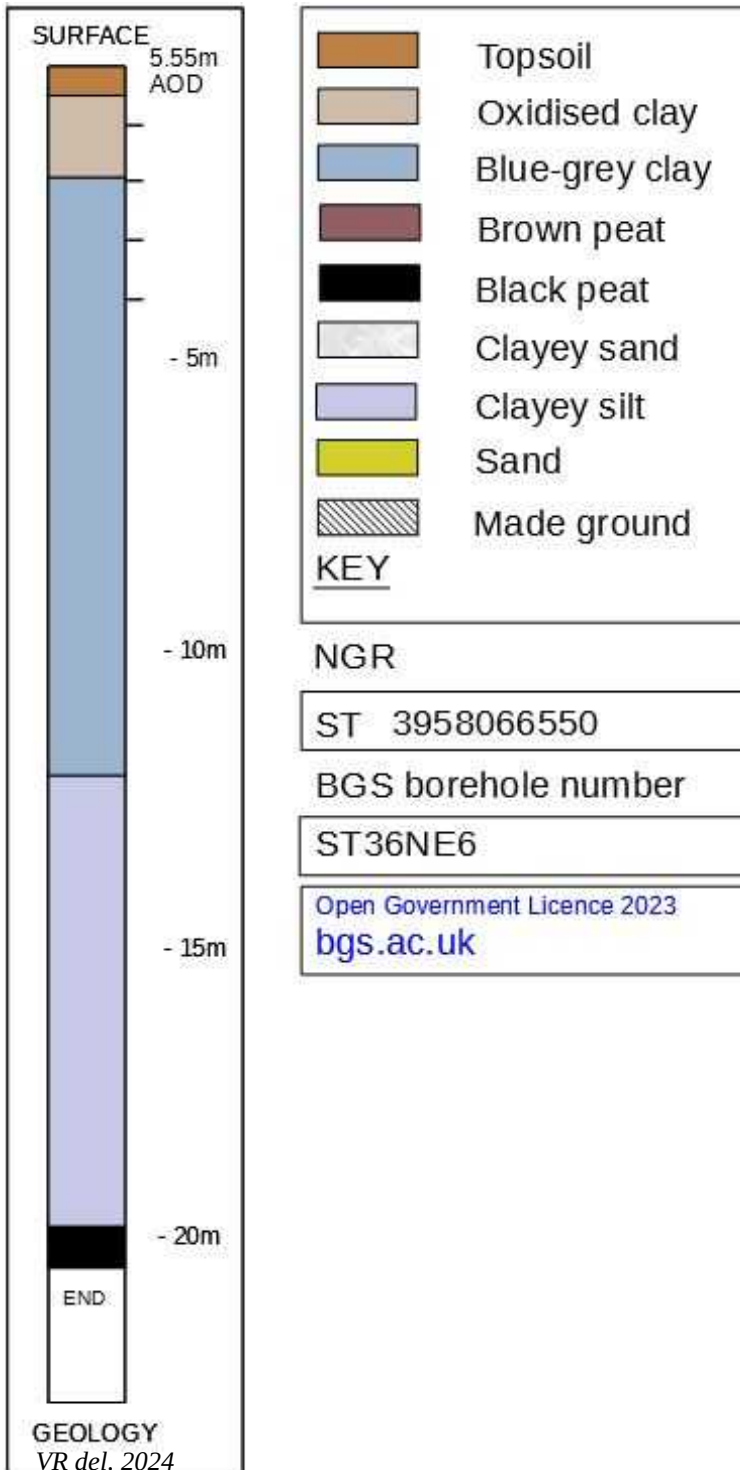
1 frag yellow-internally glazed pancheon fragment (19th c).

These fragments are very small, and apart from the thimble are not usable for dating the site.



*Fragment of mortar from trackside wall, showing brushed ochre decorated surface of plaster.*

### Appendix 3: Borehole ST36NE6 (ROSS SPUR BYPASS 144)



This (the nearest borehole recorded by the British Geological Society to the site) is situated opposite the gate to Plenty's Farm, in Ham Lane, Kingston.

This shows (in simplified form) the alluvial geology at the site, and by extension, probably something resembling that at Rose Cottage, some 400m SW.

It is likely (but not yet proven) that the upper oxidised clay is that laid down in the post-Roman alluviation of the area: if this is indeed so, the Roman landscape lies on the site of this borehole, at about 3.5m AOD, 2m below the current surface. Any post-Roman activity is likely to be in the top 20cm of the oxidised clay, although obviously, negative features such as pits and ditches may well penetrate this to the grey clays and encounter the Roman landscape.

## Appendix 4: Lidar and drone images of the site and environs

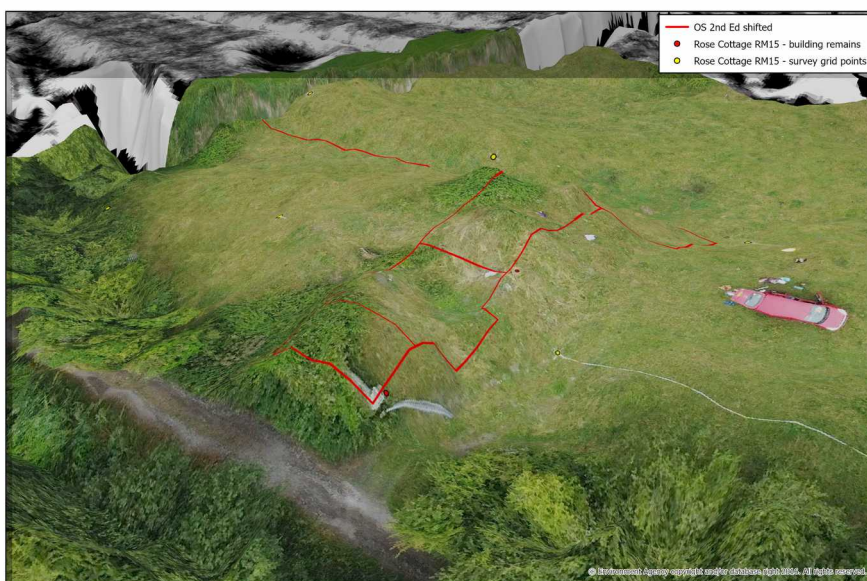
All images derived from lidar data from the Environment Agency, and processed by Richard Pearson.

Rose Cottage - Kingston Seymour - Drone - Building outline from OS moved to match remains

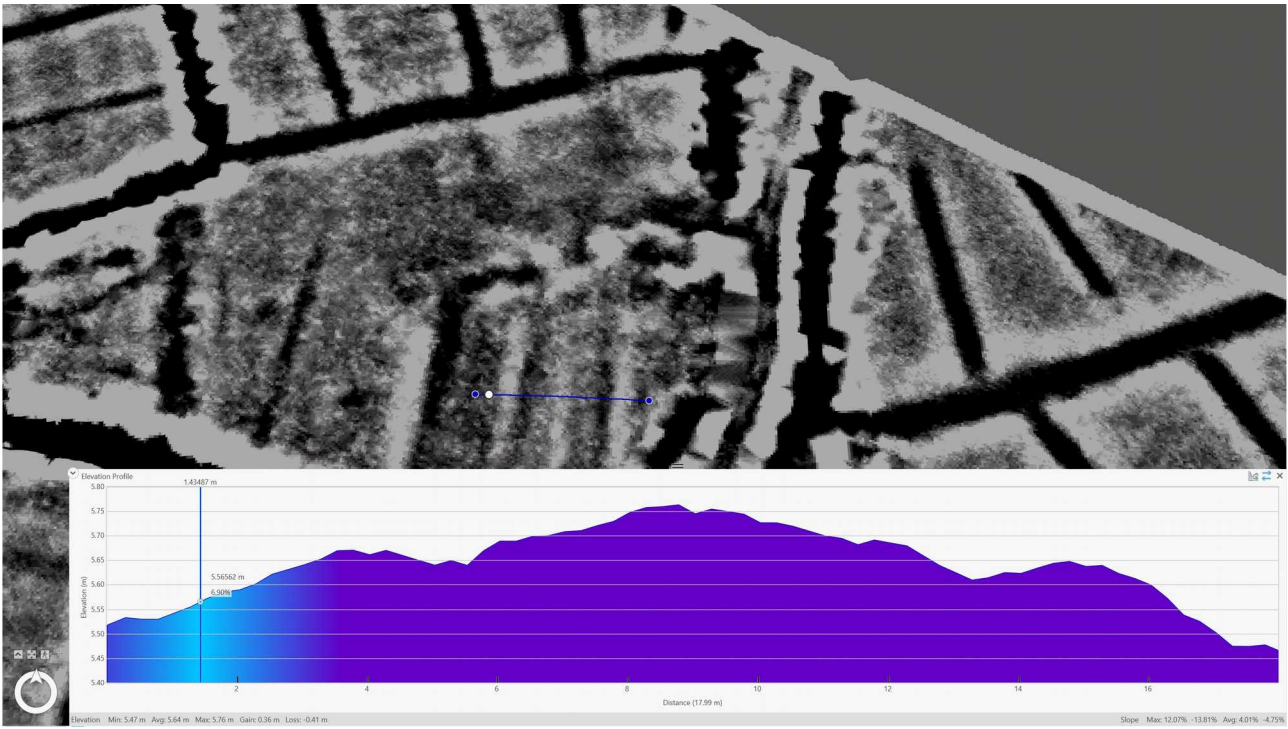


*Drone image with OS 2nd edition plan superimposed, August 2024*

Rose Cottage - Kingston Seymour - building outline - 3D x8 vertical exaggeration



*Rose Cottage analysis 8  
- building outline plus  
drone 3D, showing  
earthwork of dwelling*



*Profile (blue line) across earthworks in garden south of dwelling (© Environment Agency copyright and/or database right 2016. All rights reserved.)*