

# **RAPID APPRAISAL OF ENGINEERING IMPACT**

**(for Bristol Water)**

**OLD COACH ROAD**

**AXBRIDGE**

**SOMERSET**

**NGR: ST 4117 5476 – ST 4139 5473**

**JOB N<sup>o</sup>: BA1304BWOCR**



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**Report specification**

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## Executive Summary

This Rapid Appraisal of a water mains renewal scheme extending for 220m along Old Coach Road through the village of Cross (Somerset), approximately 0.7km W of Axbridge, has been undertaken in response to a request from Bristol Water in advance of engineering works.

Limited evidence of prehistoric activity has been identified about 100m E of the eastern terminus of the route, chiefly represented by the discovery of a gold torc of Bronze Age date made during excavations of foundations for a pumping station S of Old Coach Road in 1898. A recent evaluation undertaken close to the findspot revealed a sequence of deep alluvial and peat deposits which yielded radiocarbon dates extending back to the early Bronze Age.

The potential for revealing evidence of prehistoric activity has been assessed as **Low to Moderate**. While the results of previous investigations to the S of Old Coach Road indicate the potential for deep alluvial and peat deposits of prehistoric date to be encountered in the vicinity of the study area, the limited extent of the proposed works along an existing carriageway (where there is likely to be significant disturbance from modern road construction works and service trenching) suggest that the probability of revealing buried land surfaces, features or finds of prehistoric date is minimal.

The potential for encountering evidence for Roman and medieval activity has been assessed as **Low**. Although finds of Roman and medieval pottery have been made in the immediate vicinity of the pipeline route, none of this material was apparently derived from stratified occupation deposits or features.

The potential for encountering evidence of archaeological deposits and features of post-medieval date has been assessed as **Low to Moderate**. Evidence of earlier road metalling associated with the Old Coach Road, a long-established routeway turnpiked in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, might possibly be identified during the pipeline works; however, any such remains would, in all probability, have been heavily disturbed by later road construction works and installation of services.

The potential for encountering significant archaeological deposits and features on the route of the proposed pipeline has been assessed in overall terms as **Low**, based upon the limited extent of the proposed works, the fact that the entirety of the route extends for its entire length along an existing carriageway and the relative paucity of recorded archaeological remains in the immediate vicinity of the pipeline route.

A copy of this Appraisal will be supplied to Bristol Water and remitted to Somerset Council for their approval.

**Conclusion and Recommendations:** In view of the restricted extent of the proposed mains renewal works within an existing carriageway and the relatively limited scope of the archaeological record for this area, no archaeological observation of ground works is deemed necessary in this instance.

## 1. Introduction

The route of the proposed water mains scheme extends for approximately 220m along Old Coach Road, an unclassified road running E-W through the hamlet of Cross, approximately 0.7km W of Axbridge (Somerset). The route extends E from the junction of Old Coach Road and Webbington Road (NGR ST 4117 5476) and terminates just to the W of the junction with Springfield Close (ST 4139 5473) (*fig. 1*). The proposed engineering methodology consists of sliplining (requiring the excavation of small access pits) for the installation of a 125mm diameter pipe.

This Rapid Appraisal constitutes a rapid trawl of archaeological databases and other readily available sources of historical and archaeological information (where deemed appropriate) to identify whether a proposal has a potential archaeological dimension requiring further clarification.

The following sources were consulted in the preparation of this Rapid Appraisal.

### *Evaluation and study of archaeological databases*

A search was made of the Somerset Historic Environment Record (HER) for any sites of archaeological or historic interest within a 200m corridor (100m on either side of the pipeline route) (*fig. 2*).

### *Evaluation and study of primary sources*

The tithe apportionment for Compton Bishop parish and the Axe Drainage Survey were both consulted.

### *Evaluation and study of secondary sources*

Secondary sources relating to the study area were consulted using the collections held at the Somerset Heritage Centre.

### *Evaluation and study of cartographic and other pictorial evidence*

A limited number of historic maps were consulted, including Day and Masters map of Somerset (1782), the Axe Drainage Survey (1810), the tithe apportionment for Compton Bishop parish and the OS 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> edition 6 inch and 25 inch maps.

### *Soils and Geology*

Two predominant soil types have been identified in the vicinity of the study area, namely:

To the N of the pipeline route the predominant soil type consists of brown rankers of the CRWBIN (313c) series, comprising very shallow and shallow well-drained loamy soils over limestone, often on steep slopes, with limestone pavement and other rock exposures common. The underlying geology consists of Carboniferous limestone.

To the S of the pipeline route, the predominant soil type comprises humic-alluvial gley soils of the DOWNHOLLAND 1 series (851a), comprising deep stoneless humose clayey soils, calcareous in places, with some peat soils and deep humose calcareous silty soils overlying marine alluvium and fen peat (SSEW, 1983).



Fig. 1: Plan showing route of proposed water mains scheme at Old Coach Road, Cross, Axbridge  
(Reproduced by courtesy of Bristol Water)

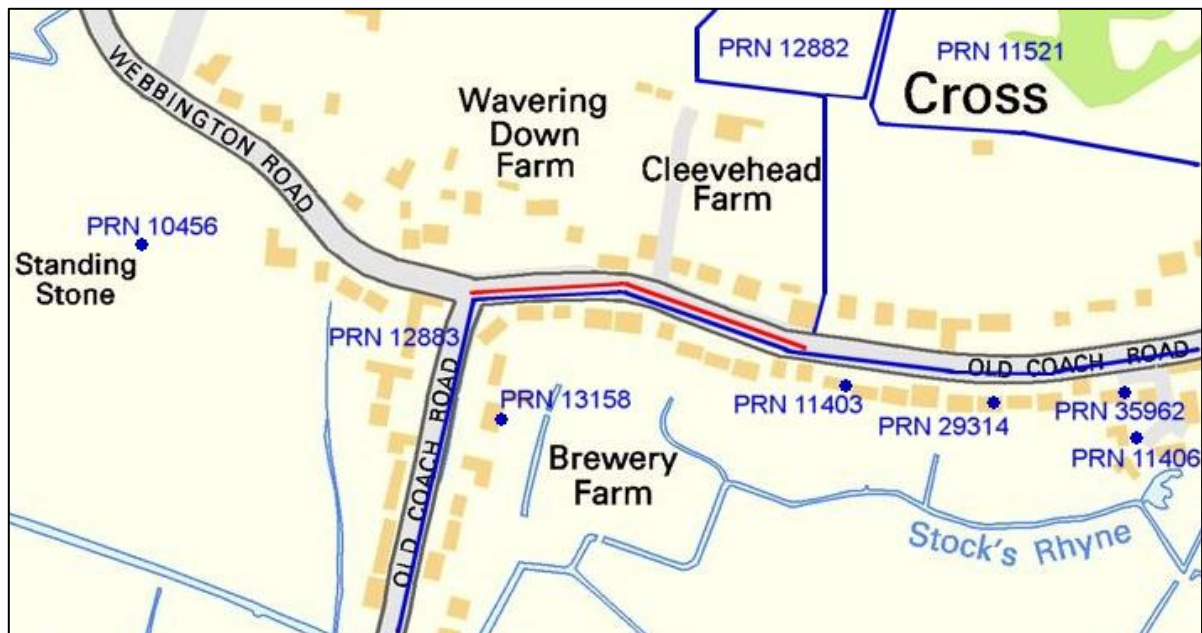


Fig. 2: Plan showing sites recorded in the Somerset HER in the vicinity of the pipeline route (marked in red)  
(Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2013)

## 2. Summary Assessment

The route of the proposed water mains scheme extends for approximately 220m E from the junction of Old Coach Road and Webbington Road (NGR ST 4117 5476) and terminates just to the W of the junction with Springfield Close (NGR ST 4139 5473).

### *Prehistoric*

No archaeological records relating to prehistoric activity have been identified in the immediate vicinity of the pipeline corridor (defined as 100m on either side of the pipeline route) based on a consultation of the Somerset Historic Environment Record (HER). However, evidence of prehistoric activity has been identified in the wider locality of the route. Located approximately 200m E of the western terminus of the pipeline route at NGR ST 4098 5749 is a possible standing stone, consisting of an upright block of conglomerate standing to a height of 1.3m (PRN 10456). The date and purpose of this stone is uncertain; it was described as being 'perhaps of no great antiquity' in 1915 and could possibly represent a rubbing stone or field boundary marker of post-medieval date (Knight, 1915, 332).

Located at NGR ST 4158 5468, approximately 200m ESE of the eastern terminus of the route, is the findspot of a looped gold torc of Bronze Age date (PRN 11406), measuring 3.5in long × 2.5in wide, which was discovered in 1898 at a depth of 8ft when digging foundations for the pumping station of the South Marsh Water Works (Knight, 1915, 334). An evaluation was undertaken on the site of the former pumping station and an adjoining petrol depot in 1999 (PRN 35962) comprising three long trenches and two test pits and a sequence of auger holes. No archaeological features were revealed; however, a sequence of deep peat deposits was identified (extending to a depth in places exceeding 3m), interleaved with and capped by alluvial silts. Radiocarbon dating of the peat deposits established that they gradually accumulated from the early Bronze Age through to the early to middle Iron Age. Within one of the trenches, a burnt flint was recovered from the lowest peat deposits overlying natural clay, which was identified as a serrated blade fragment of Neolithic or possibly Mesolithic date. Within the northernmost trench excavated, a deep accumulation of colluvium was revealed, sealing a charcoal-rich former ground surface which yielded a radiocarbon date of 1597-1261 BC (Kenyon, 1999).

The potential for revealing evidence of prehistoric activity has been assessed as **Low to Moderate**. While the results of the excavations on the former pumping station site to the S of Old Coach Road have indicated the potential for deeply stratified alluvial and peat deposits of prehistoric date to be encountered in the vicinity of the study area, the limited extent of the proposed mains renewal works along an existing carriageway, together with the likelihood of encountering disturbance as a result of modern road construction works and service trenching suggest that the probability of revealing buried land surfaces, occupation features or finds of prehistoric date is minimal.

### *Roman*

Consultation of the Somerset HER identified two sites of Roman date in the immediate vicinity of the pipeline corridor. Finds of Romano-British pottery have been reported from the back gardens of two groups of recently built bungalows to the S of Old Coach Road, the nearest (PRN 11403) being located approximately 15m ESE of the eastern terminus of the pipeline route at ST 414 547, while the other findspot is located approximately 100m ESE of the eastern route terminus at ST 415 547 (PRN 29314). Information on these finds is limited but it appears that the pottery was not recovered from stratified contexts and must therefore be regarded as residual.

The potential for evidence of Roman activity has been assessed as **Low**. Although Romano-British pottery has been found in relatively close proximity to the route, all the finds appear to have been entirely residual in context and thus do not necessarily indicate a focus of Roman settlement in the immediate vicinity of the route.

### *Medieval*

Finds of medieval pottery have been reported in the back gardens of several modern bungalows to the S of Old Coach Road at NGR ST 415 547, approximately 100m ESE of the eastern terminus of the pipeline route (PRN 29314). Located on the S-facing hillside to the N of Old Coach Road, approximately 135m N of the pipeline route, is an extensive area of lynchets or field enclosure boundaries of medieval or early post-medieval origin, centred on NGR ST 4170 5491 and extending over an area measuring approximately 76m × 28m (PRN 11521).

The potential for encountering archaeological evidence of medieval occupation has been assessed as **Low**, reflecting the distance of the recorded features from the proposed pipeline route.

### *Post-Medieval*

Two archaeological sites of post-medieval date were identified in the immediate vicinity of the pipeline route, based on a consultation of the Somerset HER.



*Fig. 3: Extract from an OS surveyor's drawing of Axbridge and district (1811) showing the pipeline route extending along Old Coach Road*  
 (Reproduced by courtesy of Somerset Heritage Centre)

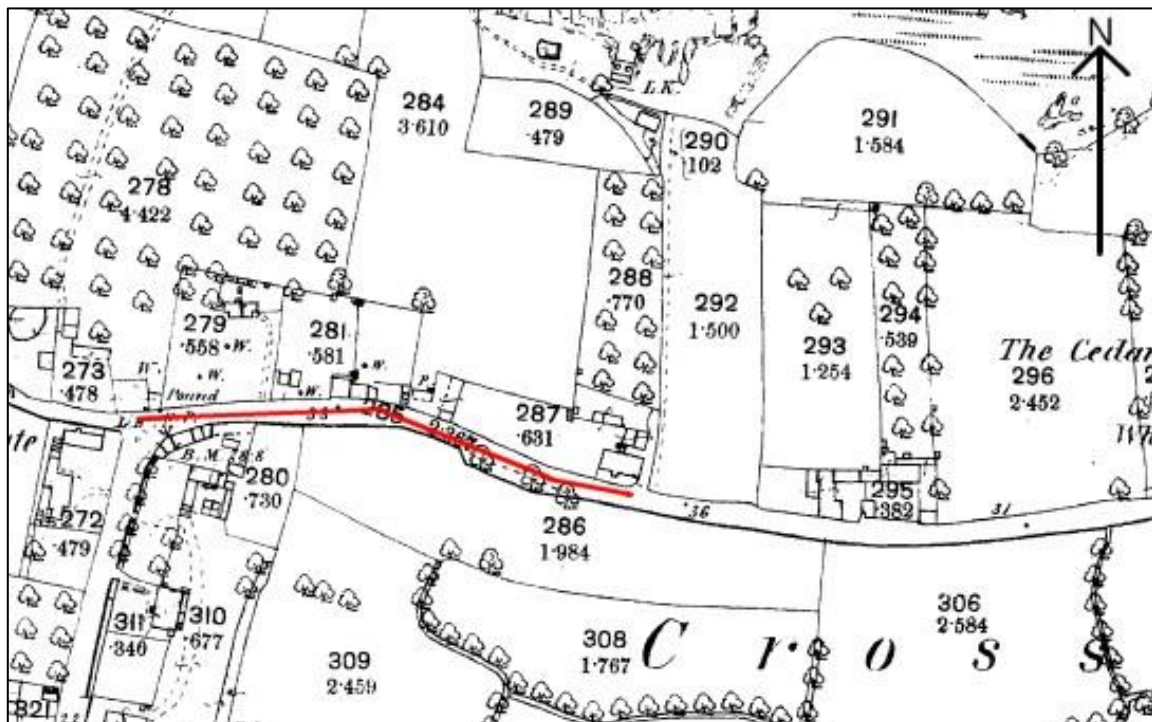
The route directly runs along Old Coach Road (PRN 12883), which, as its name suggests, was a long-established routeway heading W of Axbridge towards Compton Bishop, with a branch heading SSW towards Lower Weare. In 1749, this routeway was turnpiked by the Bristol Trust from Axbridge as

far as Lower Weare and was subsequently extended westwards to East Brent by the Bridgewater Trust in 1759.

Situated approximately 10m NE of the eastern route terminus is a trackway (NGR ST 4139 5473), oriented N-S, which represents the course of a former incline which extended downslope from a large post-medieval quarry site located about 150m N of the road (PRN 12882; NGR ST 414 549). The incline and the associated quarry appear to be visible on an Ordnance Survey drawing (at a scale of 2 inches to the mile) of 1811 (*fig. 3*) and are later depicted on the Compton Bishop tithe map of 1839, the OS 1<sup>st</sup> edition map of 1886 (*fig. 4*) and subsequent OS maps of the area.

The hamlet of Cross appears to have originated as a roadside settlement during the early post-medieval period; the earliest documented reference to the hamlet occurs in a property deed of 1575 (Humphreys, 1909, 257). One listed building of post-medieval date is recorded in the vicinity of the pipeline corridor, namely Brewery Farmhouse (PRN 13158), a Grade II listed farmhouse of 18<sup>th</sup> century date re-fronted in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, situated approximately 70m S of the western route terminus at NGR ST 4119 5649.

The potential for encountering evidence of archaeological deposits and features of post-medieval date has been assessed as **Low to Moderate**. It is possible that evidence of earlier road metalling associated with the Old Coach Road (which appears to be a fairly long-established routeway dating back at least to the 18<sup>th</sup> century) might be identified during the pipeline works; however, any such remains would, in all probability, have been heavily disturbed by later road construction works and installation of services. It is possible, but unlikely, that the pipeline groundworks will reveal evidence of the incline associated with the post-medieval quarry site to the N of Old Coach Road.



*Fig. 4: Extract from the OS 1<sup>st</sup> edition 25 inch map of 1886  
(Reproduced by courtesy of Somerset Heritage Centre)*

### 3. References

Somerset Historic Environment Record: HER Printout

National Monuments Record, Swindon: NMR Printout

Collinson, J., 1791, *The History and Antiquities of Somerset*, 3 vols., Bath

Humphreys, A.L., 1909, *Somersetshire Parishes*, London

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Mills, A.D., 2003, *Oxford Dictionary of British Place Names*, Oxford

Morris, J. (ed.), 1980, *Domesday Book – Somerset*, Chichester

Phelps, W., 1836, *History and Antiquities of Somersetshire*, London

Richardson, M., 2001, *English Heritage Extensive Urban Survey: An Archaeological Assessment of Axbridge*, Somerset County Council

### Cartography

(All historic maps were obtained from Somerset Heritage Centre unless otherwise stated)

Day and Masters' county map of Somerset - 1782

Q/RDE/104 Axe Drainage Plan - 1810

OS surveyor's drawing of Axbridge and district- 1811

D\D/Rt/M/68 Tithe map of Compton Bishop parish - 1839

OS 1<sup>st</sup> edition 25 inch map - 1886

OS 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 25 inch map – 1903

OS 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 25 inch map - 1930

OS provisional edition 6 inch map - 1960

### Aerial Photography

Aerial photographs relating to the study area were consulted at Somerset Heritage Centre and the National Monuments Record including RAF vertical photos (1946) and vertical and oblique aerial photos of the area (1999, 2001, 2004, 2006, 2009).