

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK BASED ASSESSMENT

CASTLE HILL

BANWELL, SOMERSET

MAINS REPLACEMENT SCHEME

NGR: ST 39895 59047- ST 40075 58737

JOB N^o: BA1218BWCHB



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Frontispiece: View looking SE along Castle Hill showing Banwell Castle to right of picture

Report specification

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1. Executive Summary

This assessment, based on a detailed consideration of documentary records, historic mapping and aerial photography, as well as sources of archaeological information held at the North Somerset Historic Environment Record and Somerset Heritage Centre, suggests that Castle Hill (although not called this until after the construction of Banwell Castle in the 19th century) is a long-standing routeway which dates from at least the laying out of the town of Banwell in the medieval period.

Relatively few finds of archaeological material have been recorded from the immediate vicinity of the pipeline route; however, this may reflect a lack of recorded archaeology in this area of the town, rather than a genuine absence of archaeological deposits. Evidence of Iron Age and Roman activity was found to the rear of the Ship Inn at Banwell, about 50m ENE of the northern end of the pipeline route, sealed by up to 2m of modern topsoil and overburden.

*However, in view of the limited scale of work associated with the pipeline and the likelihood of extensive disturbance by previous road construction works and the insertion of modern services, it is considered that the potential for encountering evidence of significant archaeological remains is **low**.*

In view of the above results, Border Archaeology has concluded that no archaeological observation of groundworks is necessary.



2. Introduction

Border Archaeology has undertaken this archaeological desk-based assessment on behalf of Bristol Water to determine the nature of the archaeological resource within a section of water mains pipeline which runs along Castle Hill Banwell North Somerset.

The pipeline route as indicated on supplied Bristol Water mapping (BW Drawing No. 1771267) extends for an approximate distance of 400m along Castle Hill, from The Square in Banwell to a point opposite No. 22 Castle Hill, just before the junction of Castle Hill and Dark Lane (*Fig.1*).

The northern section of this route lies within the Core Settlement Area of Banwell (HER 43203) and the entire route lies within the Banwell Conservation Area (HER 96). The closest Scheduled Monument to the route is an undated earthwork at Banwell Cross (HER 183), located c.180m to the east of Castle Hill.

Copies of this assessment will be supplied in the first instance to Bristol Water for their consideration and to Vince Russett of North Somerset County Council.

It should be noted that this Assessment is intended as an initial part of a consultative process for agreement on a suitable mitigation strategy, this reflecting both the relative paucity of published information about the route and the absence of much previous fieldwork in the pipeline area.

2.1 Soils and Geology

The settlement of Banwell lies in an area of brown rankers of the CRWBIN series (313c), composed of very shallow and shallow well-drained loamy soils over Carboniferous limestone, where limestone pavement and other rock exposures are common (Finlay, 1965).

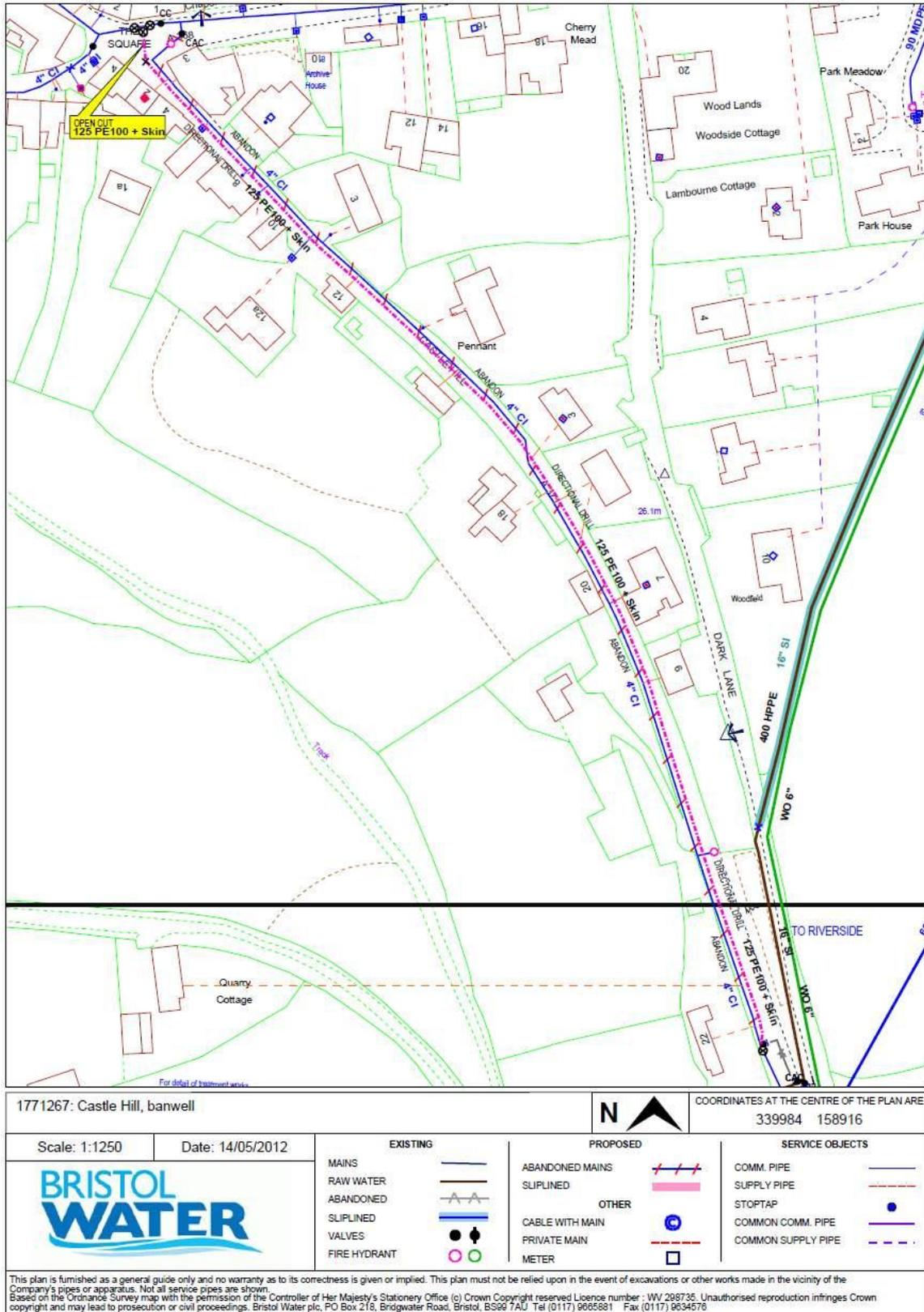


Fig 1: Bristol Water scheme map showing the route of the proposed replacement water mains pipeline marked in purple (Scale 1:1500)



3. Methodology

3.1 Archaeological Assessment

3.1.1 Research Aims

This archaeological desk-based assessment seeks to identify any known or potential archaeological resource within the study area and to establish its character, extent, quality and importance, within a local, regional and national context.

3.1.2 Research Methods

The research carried out for this archaeological desk-based assessment consisted of the following elements:

3.1.3 Evaluation and study of archaeological databases

A search was made of the National Monuments Record (English Heritage) and the Bristol City Council Historic Environment Record for any sites of archaeological or historic interest within a 200m corridor (100m on either side of the pipeline route).

3.1.4 Evaluation and study of primary sources

Primary documentary sources relating to the study area were consulted at the Somerset Heritage Centre.

3.1.5 Evaluation and study of secondary sources

Secondary sources relating to the study area were consulted using the collections held at the Somerset Heritage Centre and the North Somerset Historic Environment Record, including relevant articles in the *Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society* and published and unpublished reports relating to archaeological work in the vicinity of the study area.

3.1.6 Evaluation and study of cartographic and other pictorial evidence

Historic maps of the Banwell area, including enclosure plans and Ordnance Survey 1st-4th edition maps (at scales of 1:2500 and 1:10000) relating to the study area were consulted using the collections held at the Somerset Heritage Centre. Collections of aerial photographs relating to the study area were consulted at the Somerset Heritage Centre and the National Monuments Record Swindon.

3.1.6 Evaluation and study of cartographic and other pictorial evidence

Collections of vertical and oblique aerial photographs held at the North Somerset Historic Environment Record, the Somerset Heritage Centre and the National Monuments Record at Swindon were consulted by Border Archaeology staff.



4. Historical and Archaeological Overview

Banwell is located in the county of North Somerset, 25 km to the southwest of Bristol and 40 km to the northeast of Taunton. The settlement is located to the north of Banwell Hill on the interface between the limestone uplands of the Mendip Hills and the low-lying North Somerset Levels. Castle Hill runs south from the village square, uphill through a gap in Banwell Hill and forms part of the modern A371 between Winscombe and Weston-super-Mare. The place-name Banwell is derived from two elements: *bana* (Old English) 'a slayer'; and *wella* (Anglian) 'a spring, a stream' and can thus be regarded as suggesting 'Murderer's spring/stream' (EPNS n.d). Murderers were often drowned in streams but it has been suggested that in this case the spring or stream in question was considered poisoned or contaminated.

The village was the administrative centre for the Hundred of Winterstoke, which, according to Collinson's *History of Somerset* (1791), 'took its name from the ancient, but now depopulated, village of Winterstoke which was derived from a remarkable spot called Winthill in the parish of Banwell, where according to tradition a bloody battle was fought between the Danes and the Saxons' (Collinson, 1791, III, 559). The religious history of Banwell includes its suggested location as the birthplace of St Patrick (Jelley, 1998), although this should be treated with some caution. A 'monastery' at Banwell was granted to Asser, an advisor of King Alfred in 885AD, and appears to have had minster status with at least three sister churches at Puxton, Christon and Churchill.

During the 10th to 11th centuries, Banwell lay at the centre of what has been described as a 'federative estate' (Rippon 2006), comprising a range of dependent settlements extending to the north and east. The 9th century *Life of Alfred* suggests that Alfred the Great granted *Banuville* to Asser, who subsequently became Bishop of Sherborne. Upon his death, Banwell appears to have passed to the bishopric of Wells with the estate subsequently reverting to the Crown, although by this time its federative structure was probably beginning to fragment, first into sub-tenancies and gradually into smaller separate landholding units or manors.

Banwell subsequently passed through a succession of owners and, on the death of Harold in 1066, was acquired by King William, who restored it to Wells Cathedral in 1068. Charter evidence indicates that the 11th century bounds of Banwell encompassed the later parishes/manors of Banwell and Churchill, along with Sandford. The Domesday survey of 1086 contains a detailed entry enumerating the possessions of Banwell and valuing the manor at £10 with sub-holdings, including Compton Bishop, Knightcott, Rolstone, St Georges, Wolverhill and Yarborough, all of which lie beyond the main village and its associated open fields.

After the Dissolution, the rectory was granted to the Dean and Chapter of Bristol, with the manor being taken over by the bishops of Bath and Wells. Bishop Bekynton (1443-65) altered the manor house (now the Abbey) and subsequent work was carried out in the 18th and 19th centuries. The Bone Caves on Banwell Hill were discovered in 1821 and produced remains of extinct fauna, including bison, bear, wolf and reindeer. The area around the caves was developed by Bishop Law (1824-45) and a park, *cottage orné* and various garden structures were erected in the grounds. Banwell Castle is a Victorian folly, finished in 1847, and is castellated with square angle turrets and an ornate gatehouse.

5. Site Specific Analysis

5.1 Consultation of Archaeological Records

This section analyses the information available from records of archaeological work carried out in the vicinity of the proposed pipeline route and discusses its implications for the nature of the archaeological resource within the study area and the likely depth and survival of significant archaeological deposits and features.

- **Prehistoric**

Evidence of early prehistoric activity in the wider locality of the route is represented by a flint scatter recorded at Banwell Water Works, approximately 100m west of Castle Hill (HER 42099). Prehistoric finds have also been identified at Banwell Hill but none of these has been recovered from *in-situ* archaeological deposits. Nevertheless, these finds indicate a Mesolithic to Bronze Age presence in the vicinity, as does the discovery of a Middle Bronze Age palstave from the area (HER 2145). Evidence of late prehistoric activity in the vicinity of the study area is represented by a ditch containing relatively unabraded sherds of mid to late Iron Age pottery revealed during an evaluation to the rear of the Ship Inn at Banwell (NGR ST 3980 5909) approximately 50m ENE of the northern end of the pipeline route (Cudlip, 2005).

- **Roman**

The remains of a Romano-British villa complex (SAM 12009; HER 97) were revealed in 1967 to the north of Banwell village (NGR ST 3980 5930). The complex appears to have been abandoned during the 4th century, possibly due to gradual encroachment by the sea from the 3rd century onwards, and lies well outside the area considered here.

Earthwork remains of a Roman settlement, terracing and building platforms, lead workings and an Iron Age/Romano-British field system are visible on aerial photographs at Wint Hill, approximately 300m to the west of Castle Hill. Excavations here uncovered building remains dated roughly to between 300 to 399AD. The site has been interpreted as a possible Roman villa (Tabrett *et al.*, 1969).

Within Banwell itself, a coin of Constantine I (308-37) was found whilst digging a trench at 50 High Street (HER 101) and a coin of Claudius, a possible spindle-whorl and animal-bones were found in Banwell Pond when it was removed in 1923 (HER 42303). Roman potsherds have also been found in the churchyard (HER 10083). An evaluation undertaken in 2005 to the rear of the Ship Inn at Banwell revealed two curvilinear gullies containing pottery of 2nd-4th century date, sealed by topsoil and modern material up to 2m in depth (Cudlip, 2005). The remains of a masonry building of apparent Roman date were also identified at No. 1 East Street to the northeast of the northern terminus of the pipeline route (HER 10718).

The Historic Environment Record also contains a reference to reported burials of 'Late Antique' date (i.e. between approximately 250 and 750 AD) recovered to the east of Castle Hill opposite Banwell Castle (HER 225), approximately 40m southeast of the southern terminus of the route; however, there appears to be little detailed record of the precise nature and extent of this burial activity.

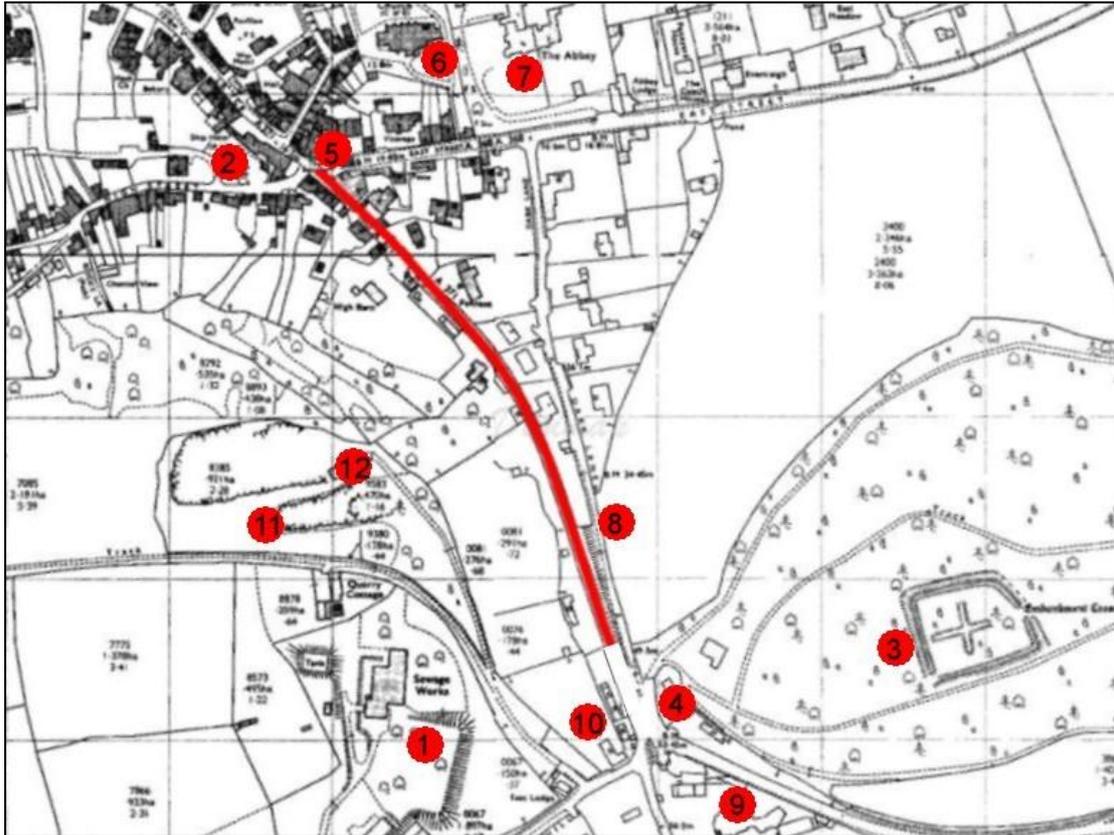


Fig. 2: Map showing location of archaeological events and monuments recorded in the vicinity of the proposed pipeline route (marked in red)

- 1/HER 42099 Prehistoric flint scatter recorded at Banwell Water Works, W of Castle Hill
- 2/Iron Age and Roman ditches and gullies identified in evaluation to rear of the Ship Inn, Banwell
- 3/HER 183 Rectangular earthwork, possibly Roman camp or medieval rabbit warren in Banwell Woods
- 4/HER 00225 Record of burials of late Roman/post-Roman date identified opposite Banwell Castle
- 5/HER 10716 Remains of Roman building identified at No. 1 East Street Banwell
- 6/HER 00098 St Andrew's Church, Banwell (12th c. with origins as pre-Conquest minster church)
- 7/HER 00222 Site of late medieval bishop's palace at Banwell
- 8/HER 42311 Dark Lane – Holloway leading to gate of pre-Conquest minster church
- 9/HER 02484 Banwell Castle – Castellated Gothic mansion built in 1839
- 10/HER 40915; 40916 24-28 Castle Hill – 19th century dwellings
- 11/HER 44755 19th-20th c. quarries west of Castle Hill
- 12/HER 03083 Site of 19th c. limekiln west of Castle Hill



- **Medieval**

Although there is evidence for a Saxon monastery at Banwell, the date of the foundation of the town is not known. Given that the town is mentioned in Domesday book, a pre-11th century origin is likely, perhaps some time in the period of expanding rural economies after 800AD (Aston 1988, 73).

The road layout of the medieval settlement includes Castle Hill (formerly known simply as 'Roadway', see Map Regression, below), which may have replaced Dark Lane (HER 42311), suspected to be a hollow-way leading to the gate of the minster church. Banwell Church has Norman origins, but the present building largely dates to the 15th century. It may be on the site of a Saxon monastery and the church had minster status in the medieval period. The font is Norman and a fragment of Saxon worked stone was uncovered during work in the south porch in 1983 (HER 4951).

The site of 'Banwell Abbey', an episcopal palace of the bishops of Bath and Wells originally built in the mid-15th century and heavily altered in the late 18th/19th century (HER 222), is located to the north of East Street, roughly 100m from the end of Castle Hill. The palace was associated with two rectangular fishponds are located at ST 4000 5930 (HER 5790). The fishponds are shown as infilled on the OS 1st edition 25-inch map of 1885.

Bishop Beckington (1443-65) laid out a Deer Park in Banwell, the boundary of which runs along the east side of Dark Lane and Castle Hill (Harris 1980, 1981). The Park appears to have survived well into the 19th century (although it was not stocked with deer at this date) and its boundaries are still clearly discernible on modern maps and aerial photographs.

An undated earthwork (Banwell Cross, HER 183) is located on the western spur of Banwell Plain, c.180m to the east of Castle Hill, within the boundaries of the medieval deer park. This is a Scheduled Monument and has variously been described as a Roman Camp, an Iron Age enclosure and a tumulus. Its location within the park suggests that it is most probably a medieval rabbit warren and limited excavations in 1980 returned only post-medieval finds (Evans, 1980).

The site of the Roman villa on Wint Hill has also been interpreted as the site of the Saxon monastery granted by King Alfred to Asser in the 9th century (Tabrett *et al.*, 1969) and burials excavated from the site had been cut through Roman structures, suggesting an early medieval date. The human bone from the excavations on Wint Hill has largely been disposed of, but two radiocarbon dates of 430-610 AD and 660-810AD were recovered from two skeletons from one of these sites (Aston *et al* n.d).



- **Post-Medieval**

The spring at Banwell provided a source of power for post-medieval industries that included mills and a brewery. 19th century Trade Directories list tanning, hosiery, papermaking, watchmaking, cabinetmaking, shoemakers, basket-makers, tile- and brickmaking, brush-making and leather gaiter-makers. The Banwell Gas Light Company operated between 1865 and 1926.

Banwell Castle stands at the top of Castle Hill and is a Grade II* listed building, associated with a coach-house, gatehouse, terraces and courtyard walls. It was commissioned by Joseph Dyer Sympson, a solicitor of 7 Golden Square, London, and his wife Amelia Louisa and was begun in 1839 and completed in 1847. It is constructed of rubble with freestone dressings and the architect is not known. During the Second World War the estate was taken over by the RAF as Area Headquarters for the Barrage Balloon Section.

Nos. 2, 3 and 4 The Square at the bottom of Castle Hill are also listed buildings. No.2 is a late 18th century house, listed as Grade II, No. 3, also Grade II, is an early 19th century shop, house and warehouse (formerly a candle factory), whilst No.4 (Grade II) is a late 18th century shop with a 19th century shop-front. Towards the southeast end of the pipeline route, Nos. 24-6 and No. 28 Castle Hill are cottages of 19th century date (HER 40915; 40916). Evidence of extensive 19th century quarrying activity is recorded on the OS 1st edition map of 1885 to the west of Castle Hill, including the site of a limekiln (HER 03083).

5.2 Documentary Study and Map Regression

This section will consider the evidence of historic documents, maps and pictorial evidence (including drawings, paintings and photographs) relating to the area traversed by the pipeline route.

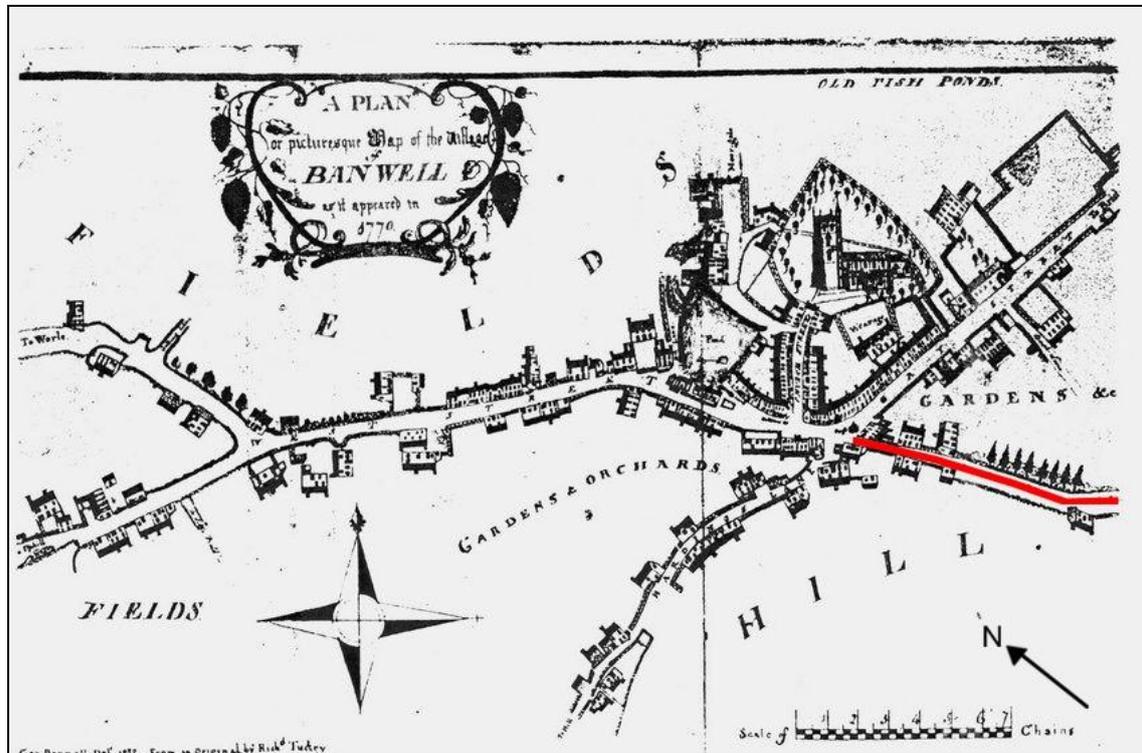


Fig. 3: Extract from 'A plan or picturesque map of the village of Banwell' (1770)
(Reproduced by courtesy of Somerset Heritage Centre)

The earliest cartographic depiction of Banwell is 'A plan or picturesque map of the village of Banwell as it appeared in 1770' (Fig 3). This is centred on the village square and shows the church to the north of the Square. West Street and East Street are shown, with Hardings Lane running to the southwest of the Square. The road that is now Castle Hill is shown as 'Roadway' and has a collection of four houses at its junction with the Square, with a further property on the west side of the road beyond a row of trees.

A plan of enclosures on Banwell Hill dated 1828 (Fig 4) shows Banwell village with the same layout of streets as that depicted on the earlier plan of 1770. There are no street names present on the plan but the road presently known as Castle Hill has seven properties at the junction with the Square, one property halfway along the road (probably that shown on the 1770 map) and two further properties at the junction of Dark Lane, Castle Hill and Winthill/The Rhodyate, which forms an open triangle of roads.

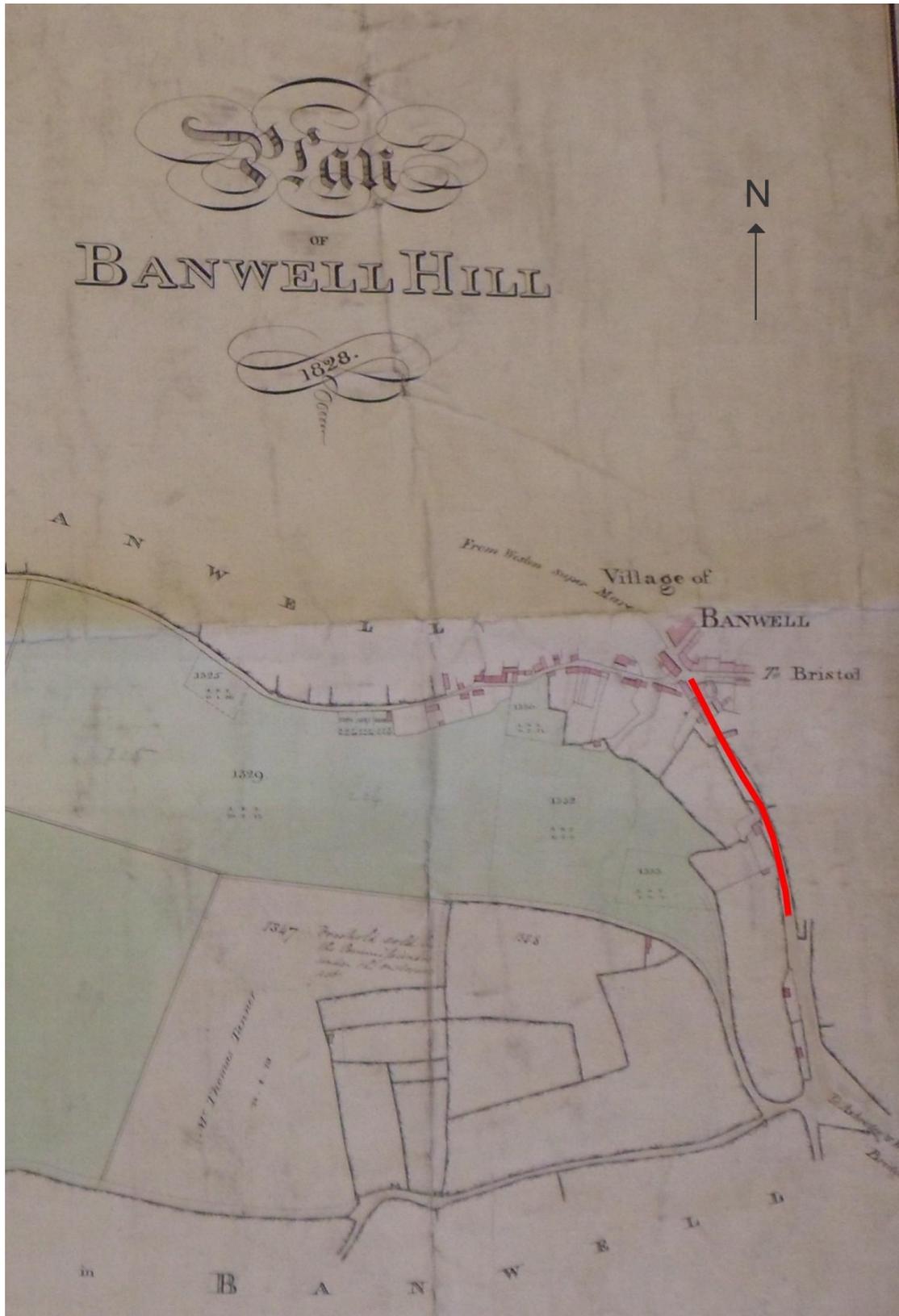
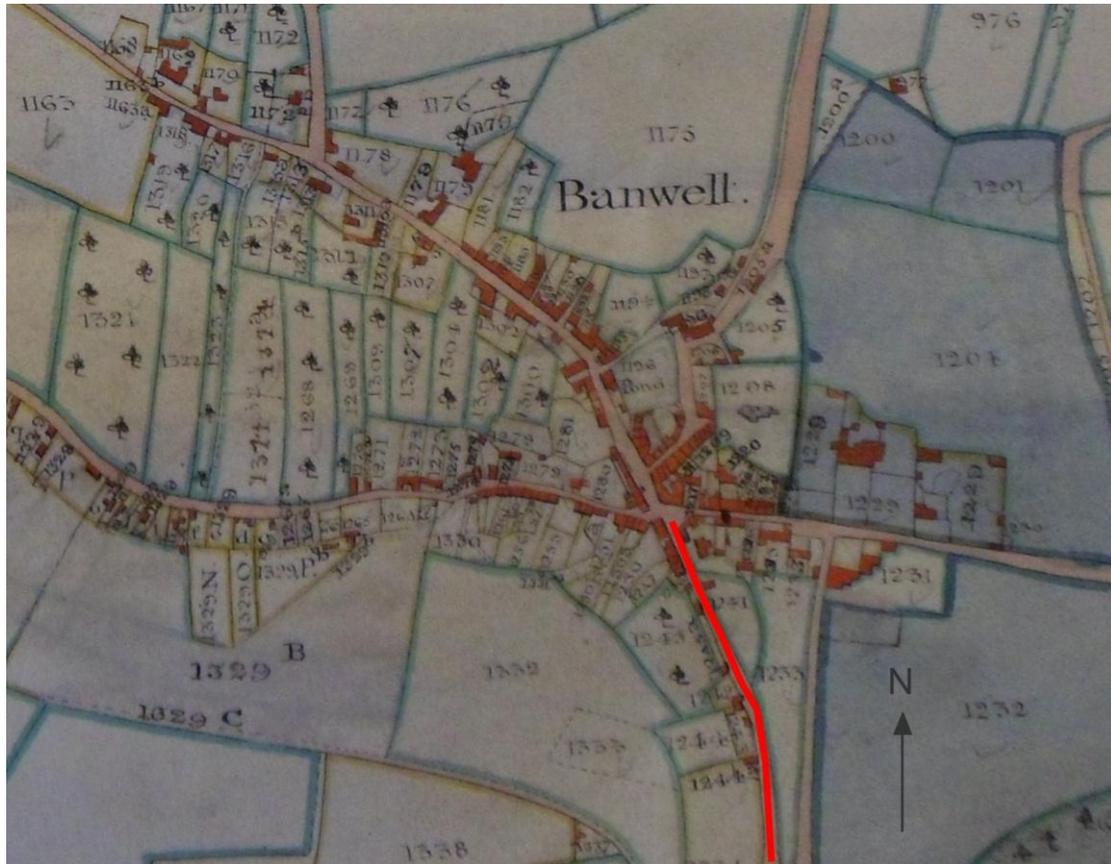


Fig. 4: Extract from a plan of enclosures on Banwell Hill (1828) showing Castle Hill
(Reproduced by courtesy of Somerset Heritage Centre)

The village is shown as an inset on the 1834 tithe map (*Fig 5*), although only the junction of Castle Hill and the Square is depicted. The pattern of properties is very similar to that of the 1828 map but two new properties are shown to the north of that in the middle of the south side of Castle Hill. None of these properties appears to have extensive gardens and they may represent ribbon development on the margins of the town.



*Fig. 5: Extract from the Banwell tithe map (1834) showing Castle Hill extending south of the village
(Reproduced by courtesy of Somerset Heritage Centre)*

The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1885 (*Fig 6*) shows slightly more development behind Castle Hill and the enclosure of what was once open land for buildings, to the rear of which are orchards. This is the first map to show Banwell Castle.

The 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map of 1903 (*Fig 7*) shows much the same pattern, although two properties now occupy the east side of Castle Hill and the junction with the Square is more developed with a total of six properties on the west side and at least four on the east. The 1930 OS County Series 3rd Revision shows exactly the same pattern of property boundaries.

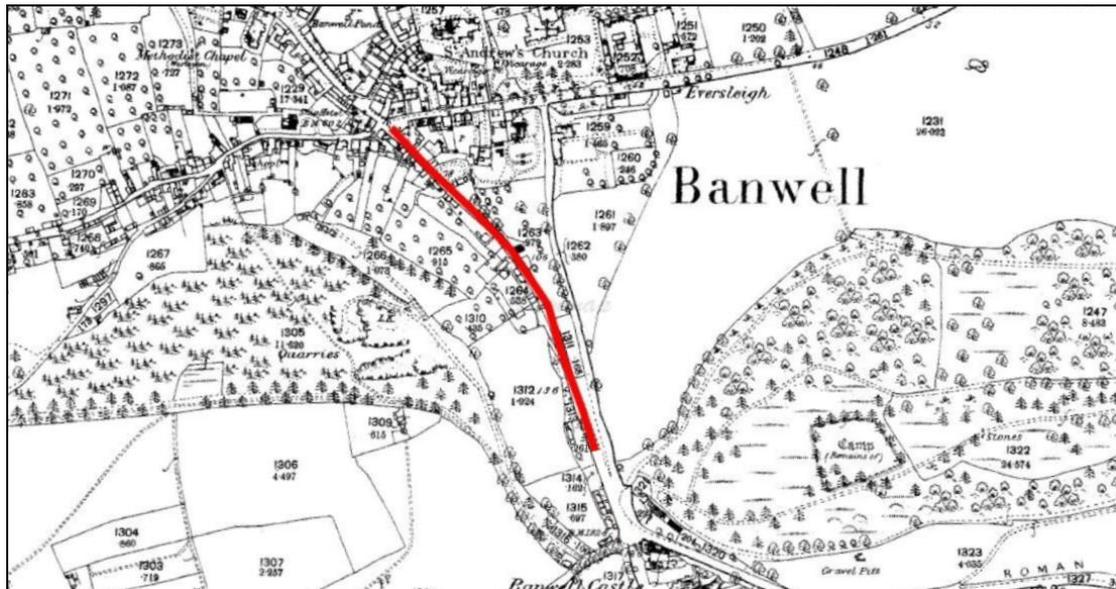


Fig. 6 Extract from the Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25-inch map of 1885
(Reproduced by courtesy of Somerset Heritage Centre)

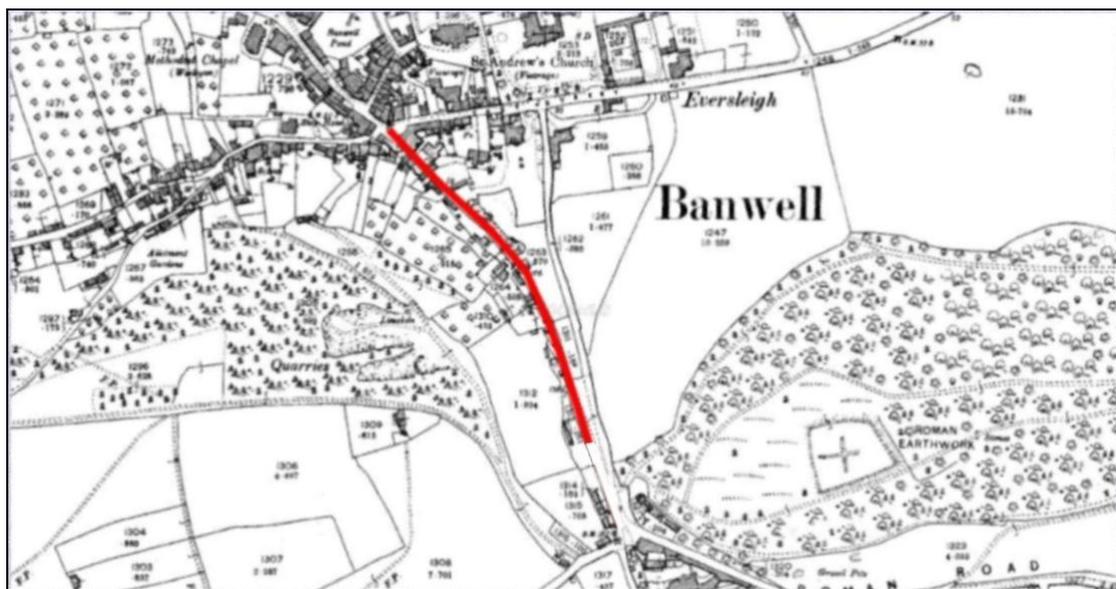


Fig. 7: Extract from the Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 25-inch map of 1903
(Reproduced by courtesy of Somerset Heritage Centre)

By the time of the 1976 OS National Grid survey, the properties at the junction of Castle Hill and the Square have been rationalised and expanded to the rear, a large property called High Barn occupying a former orchard (marked as Plot No. 1265). Some of the buildings fronting Castle Hill, halfway up on the south side, have been demolished but the east side of Castle Hill has now been developed as housing plots.



5.3 Consultation of Aerial Photographs

There is limited early aerial coverage (specifically in terms of late 1940s RAF vertical photographs) for Banwell and its immediate environs. In this specific instance it would appear that the study area lies just outside (or between) the range of the two nearest sorties.

In any case, it is unlikely that any additional archaeological features to the map regression above would be present on post-1945 photographs and none was noted in the 2009 National Mapping Programme survey of the Northern Mendip Hills (Priest & Dickson 2009).

6. Conclusion

Castle Hill forms part of the medieval street pattern of the town of Banwell and its route runs between an Iron Age hillfort and a Roman settlement site.

Relatively few finds of archaeological material have been recorded from the immediate vicinity of the pipeline route; however, this may reflect a lack of recorded archaeology in this area of the town, rather than a genuine absence of archaeological deposits. Evidence of Iron Age and Roman activity was identified during an evaluation to the rear of the Ship Inn at Banwell, approximately 50m ENE of the northern end of the pipeline route.

Nevertheless, in view of the small scale of work associated with the pipeline and the likelihood of extensive disturbance by previous road construction works and the insertion of modern services, it may be argued that it is unlikely that *in-situ* archaeological deposits and features would be encountered during this work.

7. Site Visit

A site visit was undertaken by Border Archaeology staff on 28 June 2012 to determine the potential for extant archaeology on the proposed route. Photographs were taken from key vantage points along the route of the proposed pipeline, extending for approximately 400m along Castle Hill from The Square (NGR ST 39895 59047) up to a point just before the junction of Castle Hill and Dark Lane (NGR ST 40075 58737) (*Plate 1*). No features of archaeological interest were noted along the route.



Plate 1: View looking from Banwell Castle NW towards the junction of Castle Hill and Dark Lane

8. Copyright

Border Archaeology shall retain full copyright of any commissioned reports, tender documents or other project documents, under the Copyright, Designs & Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved; excepting that it hereby provides an exclusive licence to the client for the use of the report by the client in all matters directly relating to the project as described in the Project Specification.

9. Bibliography

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Somerset Heritage Centre

D\D/Rt/A/12 – Tithe Apportionment: Banwell – 1843

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10. Cartography & Aerial Photography

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

“A plan or picturesque map of the village of Banwell as it appeared in 1770”: surveyor unknown (late 19th century copy of original map of 1770)

MAP\DD\CC/7187 Plan of enclosures at Banwell Hill - 1828

D\D/Rt/M/12 – Tithe map: Banwell – 1843

OS County Series 1st edition 25-inch map - 1885

OS County Series 2nd edition 25-inch map- 1903

OS County Series 3rd edition 25-inch map- 1930

OS National Grid. 1:2500 – 1976

Aerial Photographic Records

Aerial photographic records, including RAF and OS vertical and oblique photographs of the study area dating back to 1948, were consulted at the North Somerset Historic Environment Record, the Somerset Heritage Centre and the National Monuments Record, Swindon.



Document Control

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