

## Archaeological Observation

For

**Bristol Water**

Concerning the

Mains Water Scheme

Rains Batch

Charterhouse-on-Mendip

Somerset



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*Cover: View west showing topsoil removal*

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## 1 Executive Summary

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*Border Archaeology Ltd (BAL) was instructed by Bristol Water to carry out a programme of archaeological observation of engineering groundworks at Rains Batch Charterhouse-on-Mendip Somerset (NGR: ST 49906 56856 to ST 50073 56942) in connection with a mains replacement scheme. Site work was carried out between March 31<sup>st</sup> and April 7<sup>th</sup> 2016.*

*Topsoil removal was undertaken by machine to create an 8m-wide easement extending northeast over a distance of approximately 200m from the Mast Reservoir (NGR: ST 49906 56829) to the connection point south-southwest of Swymmers Farm (fig. 2).*

*The trenching was 0.4m wide and was excavated to a depth of 1.20m, commencing some 27m from a trackway (Dunning Road) at the NW extent of the upper field (ST 49952 56855) and extending northeast across two fields for a distance of 134m to connect with the existing pipeline at a marker post located approximately 340m south-southwest of Swymmers Farm (NGR: ST 50073 56942) (Plate 6).*

*The groundworks traversed a landscape containing evidence of multi-period human activity and the results of BAL's previous investigations to the northwest of the Mast Reservoir (BAL 2013) provided clear evidence of the presence of prehistoric occupation and ritual/funerary activity within the vicinity of the groundworks.*

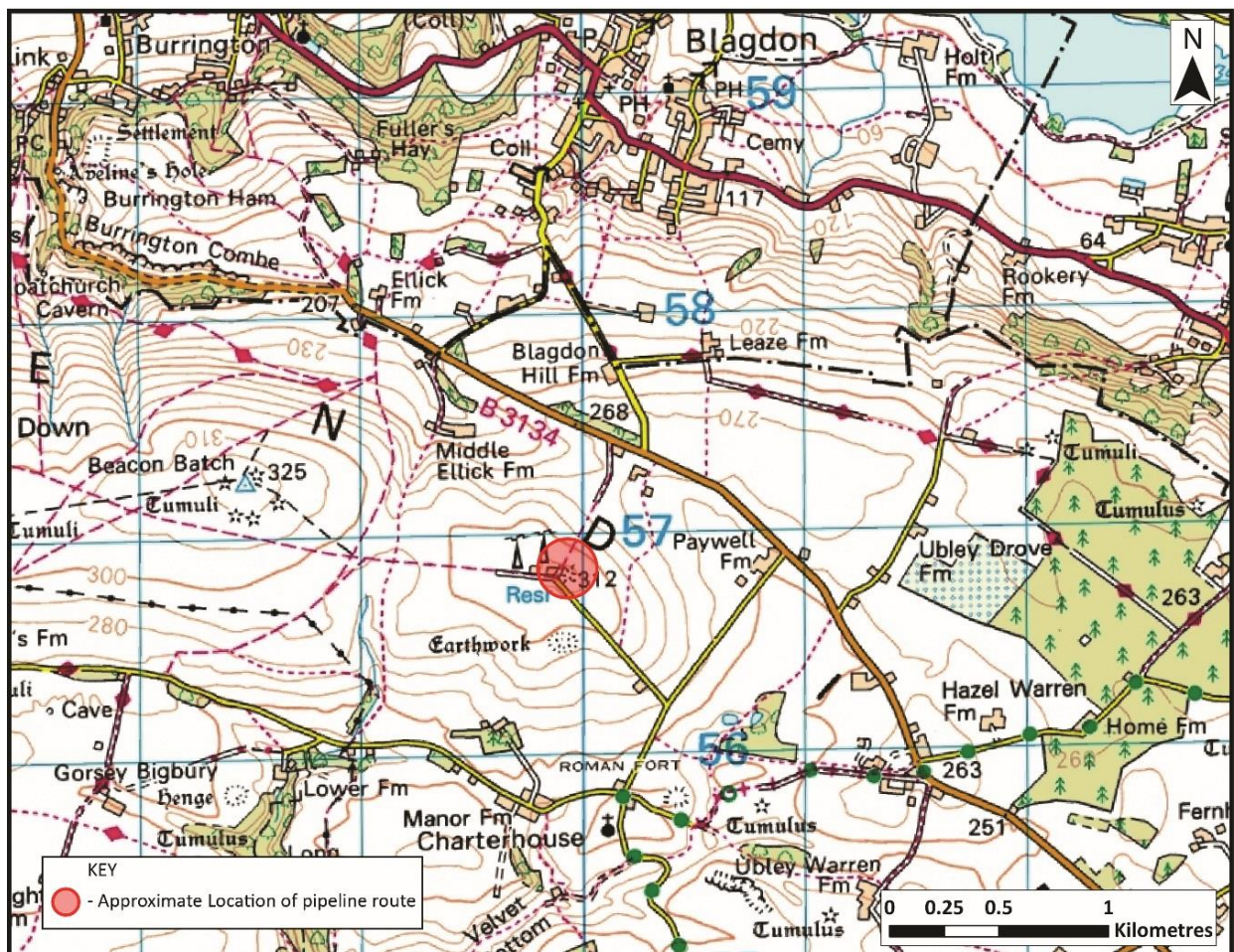
*However, in spite of the considerable archaeological potential of this landscape, neither the initial easement strip nor the subsequent trenching revealed any deposits, features or finds of archaeological significance.*

## 2 Introduction

Border Archaeology Ltd (BAL) was instructed by Bristol Water to carry out archaeological observation of engineering groundworks comprising topsoil removal and pipe-trenching relating to a mains replacement scheme at Rains Batch Charterhouse-on-Mendip Somerset (NGR: ST 49906 56829 to ST 50073 56942).

The site occupies the NW extent of the Mendip Hills, to the E of Beacon Batch and 500m S of the B3134. Site work was carried out between March 31<sup>st</sup> and April 7<sup>th</sup> 2016.

An 8m-wide pipeline easement was opened extending approximately 200m NE across two fields from the Mast Reservoir (NGR: ST 49906 56829) to an existing pipeline at a point roughly 340m SSW of Swymmers Farm (NGR: ST 50073 56942). The pipe trenching was 0.4m wide and was excavated within the easement to a depth of 1.20m, commencing some 27m E of a trackway (Dunning Road) at the NW extent of the upper field (ST 49952 56855) and extending NE for a distance of 134m, terminating at an existing marker post (NGR: ST 50073 56942) (Plate 6).



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Fig. 1: Site location

## 2.1 Soils & Geology

Two soil types were present along the route of the pipeline.

1/ Typical brown earths of the MILFORD series (541a), composed of well-drained fine loamy soils overlying Devonian sandstone, siltstone, mudstone and slate.

2/ Ferric podzols of the LARKBARROW (633) series, composed of reddish, very acid, permeable loamy upland soils with associated loamy soils with a seasonally wet thin peaty surface horizon and some with a thin iron pan, overlying Devonian reddish sandstone (SSEW 1983).

## 3 Historical and Archaeological Background

The pipeline crosses a multi-period landscape, the archaeological potential of which is discussed in detail in BAL's previous Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment carried out in January 2016 (BAL 2016).

The assessment concluded that the overall potential of the route in archaeological terms as high, reflecting its multi-period character and especially the significant potential for encountering evidence of prehistoric occupation and ritual/funerary activity, as demonstrated by the results of the previous investigations undertaken by BAL to the NW of the Mast Reservoir in 2013.

The NE end of the pipeline route also runs close to a series of extractive features which are likely to be associated with lead-mining activity of probable medieval or post-medieval origin.

## 4 Methodology

The programme of archaeological work was carried out in accordance with *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014), *Standard and Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014) and *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide* (Lee 2015, 25-5). BAL adheres to the ClfA *Code of conduct* (2014) and to the Somerset County Council *Heritage Service Archaeological Handbook* (Membury 2011).

Topsoil was removed by machine using a 1.5m toothless bucket to create a NE/SW easement of 200m × 8m. A single 134m trench was then excavated by machine to a depth of 1.20m using a 0.40m toothless bucket.

A written and photographic record was made in accordance with BAL's *Field Recording Manual* (2014). Each stratigraphic unit was recorded on a separate context record sheet and photographed using a high-resolution digital format. It was not possible to include a scale in each photograph, as the trenching was narrow and trench sides unstable. Photographic records were indexed and cross-referenced to written site records with subject and

direction-of-view information recorded on a photographic register, indexed by frame number. As no archaeological features or deposits were present, measured sketch plans and sections were drawn on record sheets.

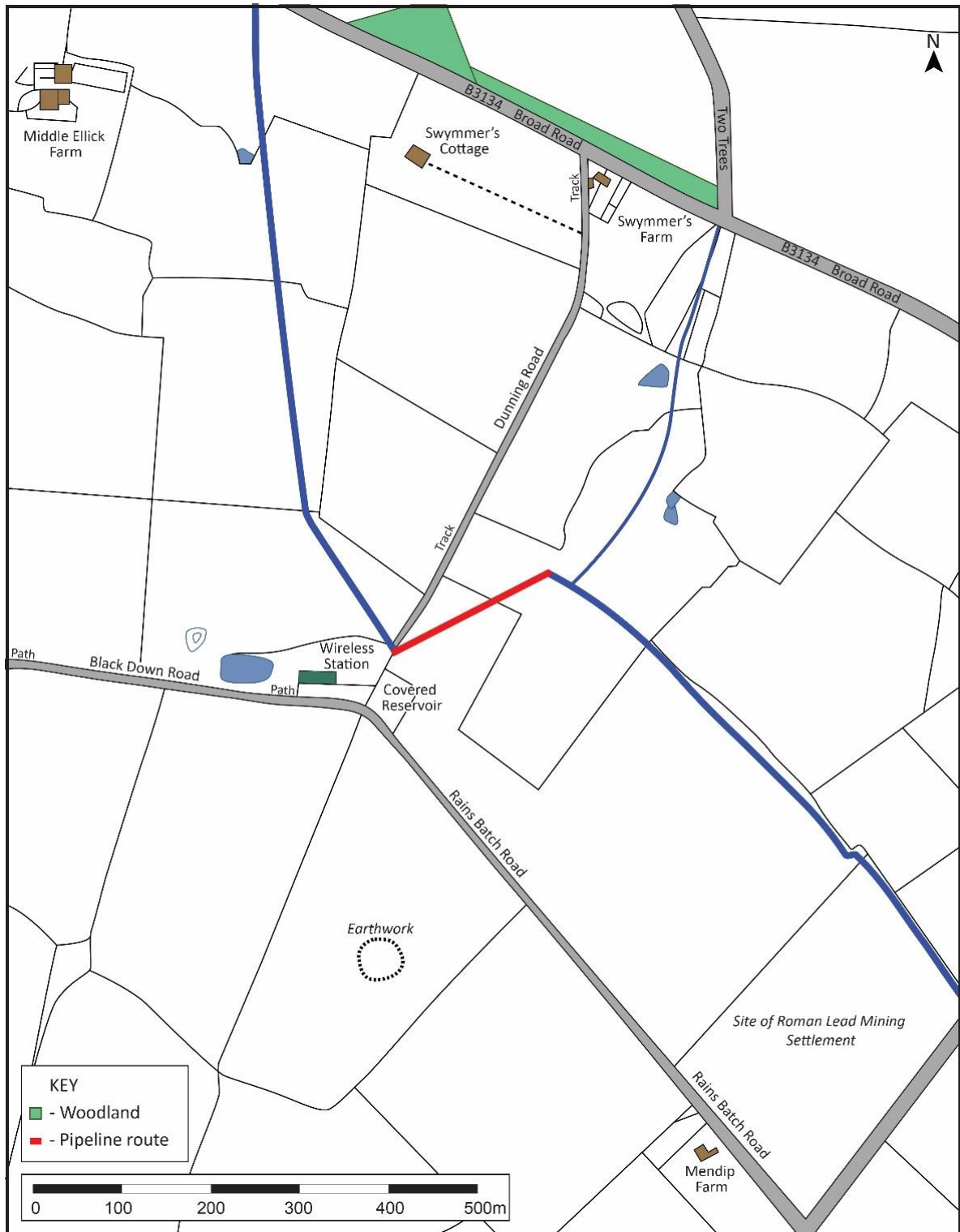


Fig. 2: Plan showing area of observation (marked in red)

## 5 Results

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
1	100		Deposit	Topsoil	Dark brownish-grey silt sand; occasional sub-angular sandstone; trench-wide to a thickness of 0.23m	-	-	-	-	-	
2	101		Deposit	Subsoil	Soft, loose greyish-brown silty sand; moderate sub-angular sandstone; trench-wide to >0.30m thickness. Underlying (100), overlying (102) & (103)	-	-	-	-	-	
3	102		Deposit	Natural deposit	Soft, loose yellowish-brown sandy silt; frequent mixed sandstone; <0.45m thick throughout. Underlying (101)	-	-	-	-	-	
4	103		Deposit	Natural deposit	Firm (loose in places) light yellow clay sand & yellow sandstone; <0.18m thick. Underlying (102), overlying (103)	-	-	-	-	-	
5	104		Deposit	Natural clay & bedrock	Very firm greenish-grey clay; bedrock outcropping; >0.04m thick (not fully exposed). Underlying (103), overlying (105)	-	-	-	-	-	
6	105		Deposit	Natural deposit	Firm light orange-brown clay sand occurring naturally below (104); extent unclear	-	-	-	-	-	
7	106		Deposit	Natural deposit	Red/pink clay sand; black inclusions (decayed bedrock). Underlying (105)	-	-	-	-	-	



## 6 Discussion

The pipeline traversed a landscape demonstrably rich in evidence of multi-period human activity, containing clear indications of prehistoric occupation and funerary and ritual activity, together with features associated with Roman lead-mining and the Roman settlement of Charterhouse (NGR: ST 500 562), located some 400m to the SE of the pipeline route. In addition, later extractive features of post-medieval and possibly medieval date lie in close proximity to the NE extent of the pipeline route.

However, the groundworks comprising topsoil removal and pipe-trenching revealed no evidence of archaeological finds or features.



*Plate 1: View NE (downslope) of trench and easement extending across pasture field adjacent to Mast Reservoir*

The upper slope at the SW extent of the trench (approximately 310m AOD) showed varying contexts of silt, sand and clay. The soils beneath the subsoil were loose and unstable due to their high sand and silt content (*Plates 1 & 2*).



*Plate 2: SE-facing trench section showing contexts (100)–(104)*



*Plate 3: View W of trench, mid slope*



*Plate 4: Deposit of Mercia Mudstone (106) below (104)*



*Plate 5: Upslope view NW of completed trench*



*Plate 6: View NW showing water marker at trench terminus*

At 70m downslope from the SW extent of the trench, the bedrock increased markedly. Colour variation was noted, including red, purple, yellow, brown and black sandstone, also grey quartz with limestone inclusions.

The steepening of the lower slope section revealed pink/red lenses (106) of the Mercia Mudstone group interspersed with greenish-grey clay (104) and gradually became less evident (*Plate 4*).

## 7 Conclusion

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In spite of the proven richness of this landscape in archaeological terms, neither the initial easement excavations nor the subsequent trenching revealed any deposits, features or finds of archaeological significance.

All deposits as revealed were essentially undisturbed and no archaeological finds or deposits were present.

## 8 Copyright

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