Negative Watching Brief: Historic Environment Record

Civil Parish & District: Wedmore, Sedgemoor	**National Grid Reference:** ST 43840 51464	**Number:** PRN 48423
Subject: Replacement water pipe at Clewer, Wedmore, Somerset		**Photo attached?** YES
Planning Application no: N/A	**Recipient museum:** Museum of Somerset	
OASIS ID: Southwes1-537507	**Museum Accession no:** N/A	
Contractor's reference number/code: CPS25	**Dates fieldwork undertaken:** 14th – 15th October 2025	

Archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken by South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) during the excavations required for the installation of a replacement water pipe on land north of Clewer, Wedmore, Somerset. The work took place at the request of The Environment Agency (the client) and was carried out by P. Scrivener on the 14th and 15th of October 2025 in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (Boyd 2025) drawn up in consultation with the Environment Agency Archaeologist (EAA) and South West Heritage Trust (SWHT).

The site consists of an irregular trapezoidal shaped field to the immediate north of the village of Clewer. The wider area is an agricultural landscape, with a network of irrigation channels to create farmland from this waterlogged area. The site is relatively level and lies at a height of c.6m AOD. The soils of this area are recorded as the deep, stoneless humose clayey soils, calcareous in places, of the Downholland 1 Association[1]. These soils overlay the sedimentary mudstone and halite stone of the Mercia Mudstone Group[2].

The proposed site lies to the immediate north of the village of Clewer, in the parish of Wedmore and the historic hundred of Bempstone[3]. Clewer was recorded as a settlement with 6 households in the Domesday Book[4]. The Somerset Historic Environment Record (HER) records the route of a former course of the River Axe crossing the site from north to south (41241). Along the south-western boundary of the site, the HER also notes the canalisation of the River Axe between Lower Weare and Clewer (28602), and, at the northern end of the site, where the proposed replacement pipeline begins is the Clewer Pumping Station (48334). The canalisation of the river here is dated to 1316[5] and the pumping station to 1968-9[6].

Fieldwork c.200m to the south-east of the site has identified a Roman villa (HER: 29833), and geophysical survey of the adjoining fields has identified large curving linear anomalies; there is also a Prehistoric enclosure c.225m to the SSE of the site (HER: 31923). A trench evaluation of the field immediately to the south of the site encountered a post-medieval wall and two shallow linear features that produced Romano-British pottery (Fletcher-Cutts 2015). In addition, the tithe-era field-name (shared with a block of fields in the locality) was Cutlers Barrs, which may be related to a series of early field-names (1747 Scutlers Barrs, 1711 Scuttells Barrows, 1657 Scuttles Barrs, 1558 Skuttells Barrough) implying the presence of barrows or possibly dung heaps (from OE scytel 'dung') (see Hudson & Neale 1997).

Modern aerial photography (2001 – 2024) showed the site as being predominantly agricultural land and consistent with the historic mapping that is summarised above, as well LiDAR for the site clearly showed the line of the former river channel running north to south just east of the centre of the site. Slight circular shadows on fields surface, just visible on the aerial imagery, favoured the possibility of potential archaeology. Furthermore, the Somerset Levels is recognised as having a relatively high likelihood of locating archaeological resources, mainly due to the high concentration of known Romano-British and Prehistoric occupation as well as the waterlogged environs allowing greater preservation of the more ephemeral artefacts such as flora, fauna, charcoal, and human remains. As such, archaeological monitoring was required during all excavations carried out for the development.

Excavations were carried out by a tracked 360 mechanical excavator initially fitted with a 1m wide toothless grading bucket. A total of ten rectangular pits were excavated measuring 1.25m long x 1m wide, positioned at c.50m intervals along the eastern and southern perimeters of the field. Each pit was dug to a depth of the natural which was consistent across the site (*c.* 0.25m deep). A narrow bucket was then attached and the ground dug to a total depth of 1m in each pit. The stratigraphy was fairly consistent across site with the topsoil being a mid brown grey silty loamy measuring up to 0.15m deep and the subsoil below a mid grey brown silty clay soil with occasional small sized stones throughout measuring up to 0.25m deep. Along the bank of the extant drainage channel refuse such as plastics, glass and building material were present within the topsoil. No archaeological remains of finds were noted or recovered during the excavations for the installation of a replacement water pipe.

Recorder: P. Scrivener, South West Archaeology Ltd.	**Date sent to HER:** 10/11/2025

[1] Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983: *Legend for the 1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales (a brief explanation of the constituent soil associations)*.
[2] British Geological Survey 2025: https://geologyviewer.bgs.ac.uk/ .
[3] https://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/SOM/Wedmore
[4] https://opendomesday.org/place/ST4351/clewer/
[5] Rippon, S. 2007: Waterways and Water Transport on Reclaimed Coastal Marshlands: The Somerset Levels and Beyond, in Blair, J. *Waterways and Canal-Building in Medieval England.*
[6] Miles, I. 1993: *Bogs and Inundations*, 34 Somerset Industrial Archaeological Society Report No. 7. Somerset Industrial Archaeological Society & Westonzoyland Engine Trust.

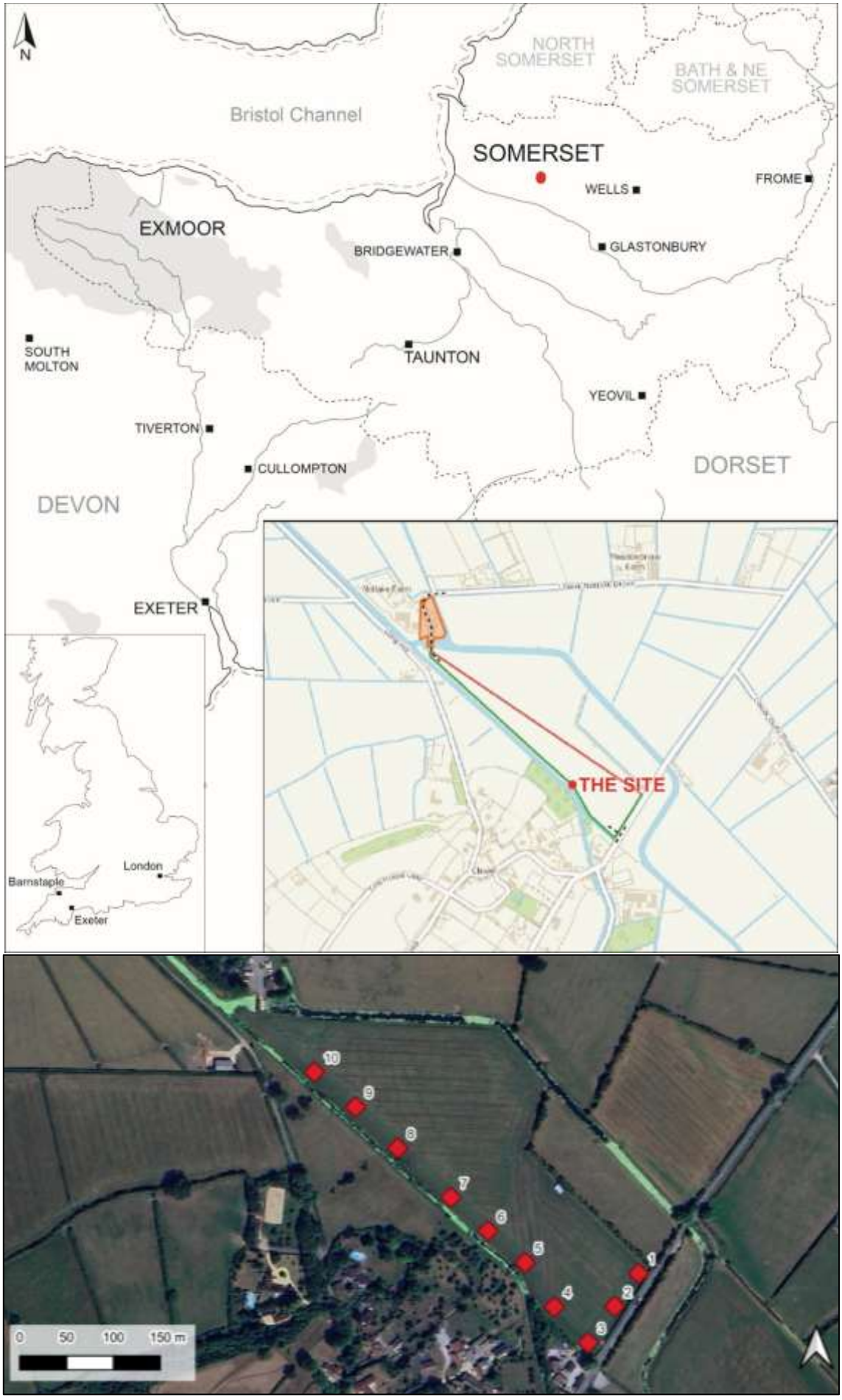

FIGURE 1: SITE LOCATION AND PLAN OF THE MONITORED PITS.

FIGURE 2. PIT 1, THE WEST FACING BAULK SHOWING GENERAL TOPSOIL AND SUBSOIL DEPTH THAT WAS CONSISTENT ACROSS SITE.

FIGURE 3. PIT 1 IN PLAN VIEWED FACING EAST.

FIGURE 4. PIT 2. DUG TO FULL DEPTH (1.00M).

FIGURE 5. PIT 3. VIEWED FACING NORTH.

FIGURE 6. PIT 1 DUG TO FULL DEPTH WITH THE DRAINAGE PIPE INSTALLED.

FIGURE 7. PIT 8. THE NORTH FACING BAULK SHOWING AN INCONSISTENCY IN THE TOPSOIL WITH INCLUSIONS OF GRAVEL AGGREGATES AND PLASTICS.

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