YCCCART 2025/Y1

The historic landscape of Kingston Seymour: origins and development

YATTON, CONGRESBURY, CLAVERHAM AND CLEEVE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH TEAM (YCCCART)

General Editor: Vince Russett

The mill race from Tutshill Ear sluice: the Northmarsh in miniature

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Abstract

This paper is largely drawn from work submitted for the opposing of a scheme by Electricite de France to convert tens of hectares of farmland at Kingston and elsewhere on the Severn littoral into 'saltmarsh', ostensibly to benefit fish breeding, to ameliorate a problem with construction at Hinkley Point. The general very poor understanding and appreciation of the importance of agriculture by the urban population cannot be overstated. Issues regarding both the development of historic landscapes in the Northmarsh and of agriculture in general are addressed in this paper.

This report has a slightly different structure to the majority of YCCCART reports here, due to the nature of its origins and use.

Acknowledgements

The people of Kingston Seymour, and especially the farming community, were extremely helpful in informing this paper.

I would like to thank Jane Bell and Peter Kingcott particularly for their help in the work towards this report.

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.

The historic landscape of Kingston Seymour

'The local area is low-lying, has very few environmental designations and is relatively sparsely populated...'
Letter from EDF to Kingston (and other) farmers and landowners 12 September 2024

Kingston Seymour and the Northmarsh of Somerset

Kingston Seymour parish (at the centre of this report) lies on the coast of the Unitary Authority of North Somerset, approximately halfway between the towns of Weston-super-Mare and Clevedon (see Fig 1 below)

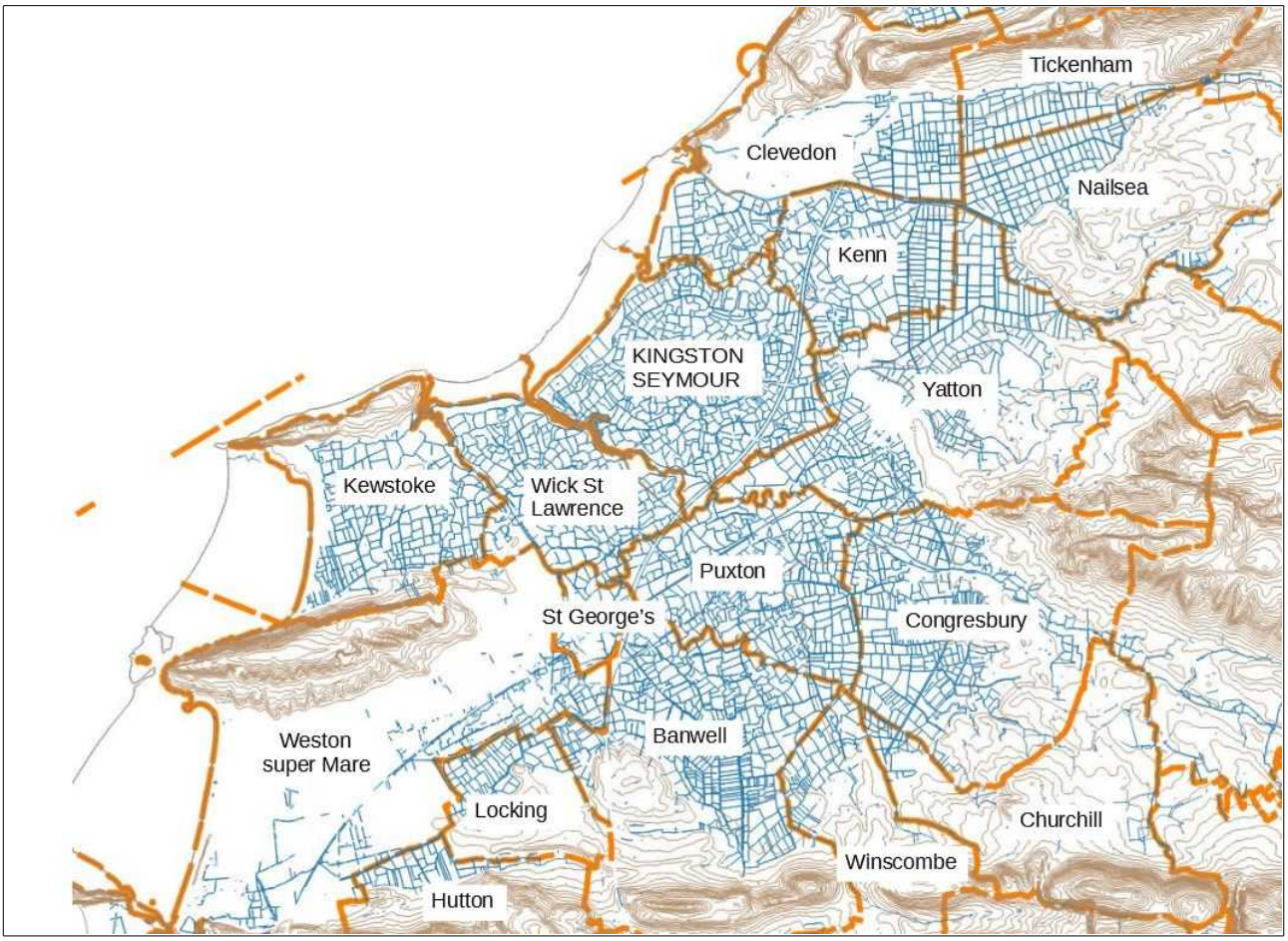

Fig 1: Kingston Seymour parish in its local hinterland (blue = drainage features)

All the parishes named in Fig 1 above have some element of their area in the Northmarsh of Somerset, the local and appropriate name for that wetland area of North Somerset that lies adjacent to the coast, bounded by the Severn to the west, Mendip to the south, Broadfield Down to the east, and Clevedon / Failand ridge to the north.

The whole area lies below c10m AOD, and largely below 6m, which renders the area wetter than the adjacent uplands, and more suited to pastoral than arable agriculture. Landscapes above all reflect the urgency and primacy of drainage in order to make these

areas habitable, let alone farm.

The coastal strip of parishes (clayland) are higher in level than the inner moors, for known and understood reasons detailed below.

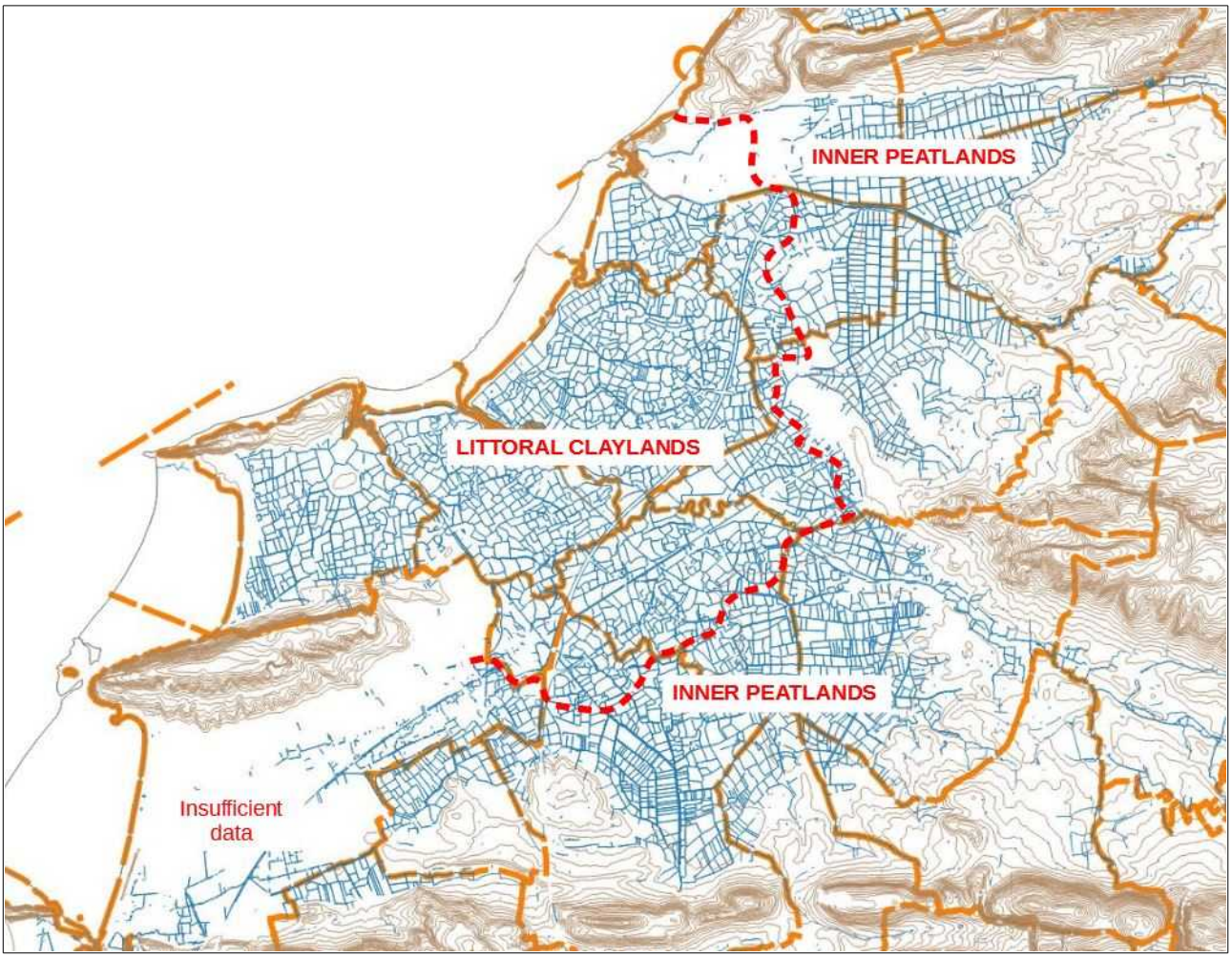

Fig 2: Division of the Northmarsh into two topographically significantly different regions

As discussed below, the different development histories of the two areas have contributed greatly to the modern landscapes: those of the clayland littoral of complex landforms and curvilinear boundary layouts, roads and drainage features, resulting from their landscape development being long and 'organic'.

The inner moors, which the post-Roman sea-borne silts did not bury, largely left the peats at or near the surface.

The areas were used well into historic times, largely as common pastures, and only divided up by eventually adopting Parliamentary Acts to promote enclosure, and resulting in very different landscapes of geometrical enclosures, planned in office environments, and enclosing the former commons, largely between 1750 and 1830CE (see Fig 5 below).

Landscape history

The study of historic landscape is a relatively new concept, having really begun in the mid-20th century. Before (say) c1950, archaeology and historic landscape was still very much the preserve of a modern elite excavating the remains of a previous elite, either Roman (as in the excessive focus on 'villas', the Roman equivalent of high-status modern country dwellings and estates) or extremely high status ('treasure') such as the excavations of a mid-Saxon royal ship burial at Sutton Hoo on the verge of WW2.

The particular genius of W G Hoskins, who published 'The Making of the English Landscape' in 1955 (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/W._G._Hoskins) was to recognise that *'No book exists to describe the manner in which the various landscapes of this country came to assume the shape and appearance they now have..'* and that this relevance of the landscape itself (now extended by such modern luminaries as Francis Pryor, extending this to the rest of the British Isles ('The making of the British Landscape' 2010), or more relevant to popular understanding, the late Mick Aston ('Interpreting the Landscape' 1985) was a novel but highly significant recognition at the time).

Subsequent recognition of the relevance of later periods of history, archaeology and modern landscape understanding came with the foundation of the Society for Medieval Archaeology in 1957 (https://medievalarchaeology.co.uk/the-sma/sma-retrospect-and-prospect/), the Society for Postmedieval Archaeology in 1966 (https://spma.org.uk/) and the Association for Industrial Archaeology in 1973 (https://industrial-archaeology.org/about-us/history-of-aia/).

The subsequent ease of access to aerial photographic cover (for example, from Google Earth), lidar cover (from the Environment Agency) or other remote sensing ability (such as access to geophysical surveying equipment) has made collection of data in, and understanding of, such environments more available.

The obsession of the media with 'treasure' and Roman elites has to a certain extent blighted this understanding in the minds of the general public (who after all, are the recipients and ultimately, paymasters, of all published material about the past).

So the 'understanding' that the current sea defences in Kingston and elsewhere are Roman in origin, while wrong in detail, *contains* a right, in that there once actually were Roman sea defences (Rippon 2006b), which have now disappeared, and that disappearance (or potential failure) has a direct relevance (the accumulation of sea-borne silts to a variable depth above the Roman landscape) to the development of the historic landscape visible and mapped by the Ordnance Survey at the current surface (and see Fig 2 above).

The existence of this Roman landscape should have been obvious from the existence of the Roman villa at Wemberham in Yatton (Reade 1885; YCCCART 2013a; YCCCART 2013b; YCCCART 2014; YCCCART 2016), or at Banwell (Anon 1967; Erskine 2000; YCCCART 2015a; YCCCART 2015b; Border Archaeology 2017), neither of which could have possibly produced the sumptuous remains found, in an undrained wetland environment.

This quantifies and explains the fact that all along the southern coastlines of the Severn, where the topography is relatively low, the lands to the immediate littoral are higher (in overall terms above Ordnance Datum) than those further inland (so in northern Somerset, Kingston is higher than Kenn Moor; Burnham-on-Sea is higher than Huntspill (Williams 1970: 8, for example), only differing in the smaller scale of the Northmarsh to the Somerset Levels. This difference has by the way, led to the crass choice by some archaeologists to name the higher claylands 'Levels' and the lower inlands 'Moors', an ignorant misunderstanding of local nomenclature.

As remarked elsewhere in this report, the lack of opportunities for archaeological study in the coastal claylands has been locally outstripped and biassed to a great degree by the long series of studies in the Somerset peatlands, a 'rescue archaeology' resulting from the environmentally destructive peat-mining industry in that area, something which never (thankfully) developed in the northern Somerset lowlands of the Northmarsh or Gordano.

Examples are legion, but the Somerset Levels Papers of the Coles's (1975-1989), the 'classic' excavations in the 'Lake Villages' by Bulleid and Gray (Bulleid 1911; Bulleid 1917; Coles 1992), and numerous smaller interventions all draw attention to the (pre)-history of the inner peatlands, while ignoring the equally high archaeological and palaeoenvironmental potential of the adjacent claylands.

Some initial gauging of this huge untapped potential for the survival of archaeological material (equally as well-preserved in the waterlogged clays of the Northmarsh, as in the peats of the Somerset levels) was seen in the Border Archaeology excavations on the Banwell pipeline in 2012 (Border Archaeology 2017), where preserved wooden structures were found, with archaeological deposits of (Border 2017: 8):

- *River terrace late Neolithic/early Bronze Age (088)*
- *Pre early Iron Age estuarine layer (086)*
- *Post late Bronze Age-early Iron Age (063)*
- *Post early Iron Age-mid Iron Age (066)*
- *3rd century AD (025)*
- *Late 4th century AD (019)*
- *Post late 4th /early 5th century AD (024)*
- *Medieval/Post-medieval (001)*

The inundations did not stop the land being used; occupation did occur both in this wet marshy area and on the overlying tidal incursion deposits as the sequence shows. (see Fig 3 below)

This modern intervention, including the finding of Roman burials with preserved organic deposits, clearly demonstrate this potential.

In addition, the palaeoenvironmental studies, showing the potential of the claylands for the preservation of evidence of past climate change, vital for the enhancing of understanding of climatic forces and changes in the current climatic environment, recorded and published by both Rippon and Border Archaeology, are telling in these

freshwater environments, especially their interactions with saltwater incursions.

Fig 3: Late prehistoric wooden structures at Banwell Riverside, uncovered by Border Archaeology 2012 (picture: VR)

The lack of publication of the geoarchaeological studies for the Hinkley C pylon and undergrounded lines through North Somerset and beyond (Staff of North Somerset HER, *pers comm*) is particularly unfortunate.

The above photograph shows the depth, complexity and good state of preservation of waterlogged archaeology in the alluvium of Banwell: note the plethora of preserved late prehistoric wooden structures and artefacts at the lower layers. The waterfilled ditch in the foreground is a previously excavated Punic ditch, potentially of a Roman fortlet.

The Northmarsh - physical form and development

The area of the Northmarsh is geologically recent, mostly consisting of alluvial and fluvial deposits laid down in the 12,000 years of the Holocene period since the end of the most recent Ice Age.

At the height of that Ice Age, sea levels were around 120m lower than today: the area now the Northmarsh was a sloping set of steep river valleys hillside leading down to the proto-Severn up to 100m below present Severn estuary level.

The rapidly rising sea levels, and the consequent building up of the silts, clays and peats resulting from various climatic and other environmental changes over that period, contributed to the formation of the landscape drained and occupied by the Roman Empire in the later Roman period.

The breakdown of Roman engineering activity and / or economic changes within the failing Empire led to the abandonment of the Northmarsh to the sea, and the subsequent buildup of a layer of accumulated silts over that landscape, as far inland as the Yatton and Banwell areas (see Fig 2). Here natural higher ground limited the effects of such deposition: the lands where the alluvial deposits were laid down became the littoral claylands, and the areas, largely of earlier peats, unreached by the sea, became the inner peatlands.

The difference in average height above sea level led to very different agricultural and enclosure development histories: the coastal claylands were reoccupied when climatic change, and the economic changes of the later Saxon kingdom led to the ability to return agriculture to this area (Rippon 2000; Rippon 2006; YCCCART 2021).

The initial stage of this reoccupation was the formation of 'infields', areas of land in the high saltmarsh that were probably surrounded by bank and ditch to keep out the highest tides (see for example, Gilbert 1996). Her work in Kingston Seymour identified a number of such infields, which work by YCCCART has shown in at least two cases, were clearly primary features in the landscape, and associated with the field name *-'worth'* in these studies, Thornworth (YCCCART 2021) and Longworth (YCCCCART 2023). Both of these had evidence of previous Roman occupation, which perhaps implies the knowledge of such occupation when the infields came to be made, possbly in the 10th-11th centuries CE, although potentially earlier.

In itself, this implies use and familiarity with the landscape during the period between the end of the Roman landscape in the 5th century CE and the 're-occupation' in the 10th. Such usage can be shown to be by use of the high saltmarsh for grazing (and potentially salt-winning: while we know salt was being made at Kingston in the medieval (and probably, Roman) periods, we do not yet have exact dates for this. Hints of a landscape possibly reflecting this period (C5 CE - C10 CE) may have been seen in studies by YCCCART, but further survey is needed to illustrate this (YCCCART 2021; YCCCART 2023).

A possible political reason for reoccupation of the Northmarsh (and especially of Kingston Seymour) was given by Nick Corcos (2002) by the incorporation of Kingston and other adjacent manors into the Chewton Hundred, to replace grazing land that had been granted away from the centre of the Hundred around Chewton Mendip, at the founding of

the Diocese of Wells in 909CE.

The boundaries of the parish itself are entirely marked by watercourses of natural or semi-natural origin: to the west, the Severn; to the north, the Kenn River; to the east, the Rust Rhyne, and to the south, the Little River / Congresbury Yeo. This is typical of very early land parcel bounds: such a boundary consisting of four watercourses in a low-lying wetland area is exactly paralleled by that for Brent, granted to Glastonbury Abbey in 693CE (Grundy 1931).

Whatever the origins, Kingston can be shown to have become a wealthy manor by the time Domesday Book recorded it in 1086 (opendomesday.org/place/ST4066/kingston-seymour/), despite Domesday's usual disdain for pastoral agriculture.

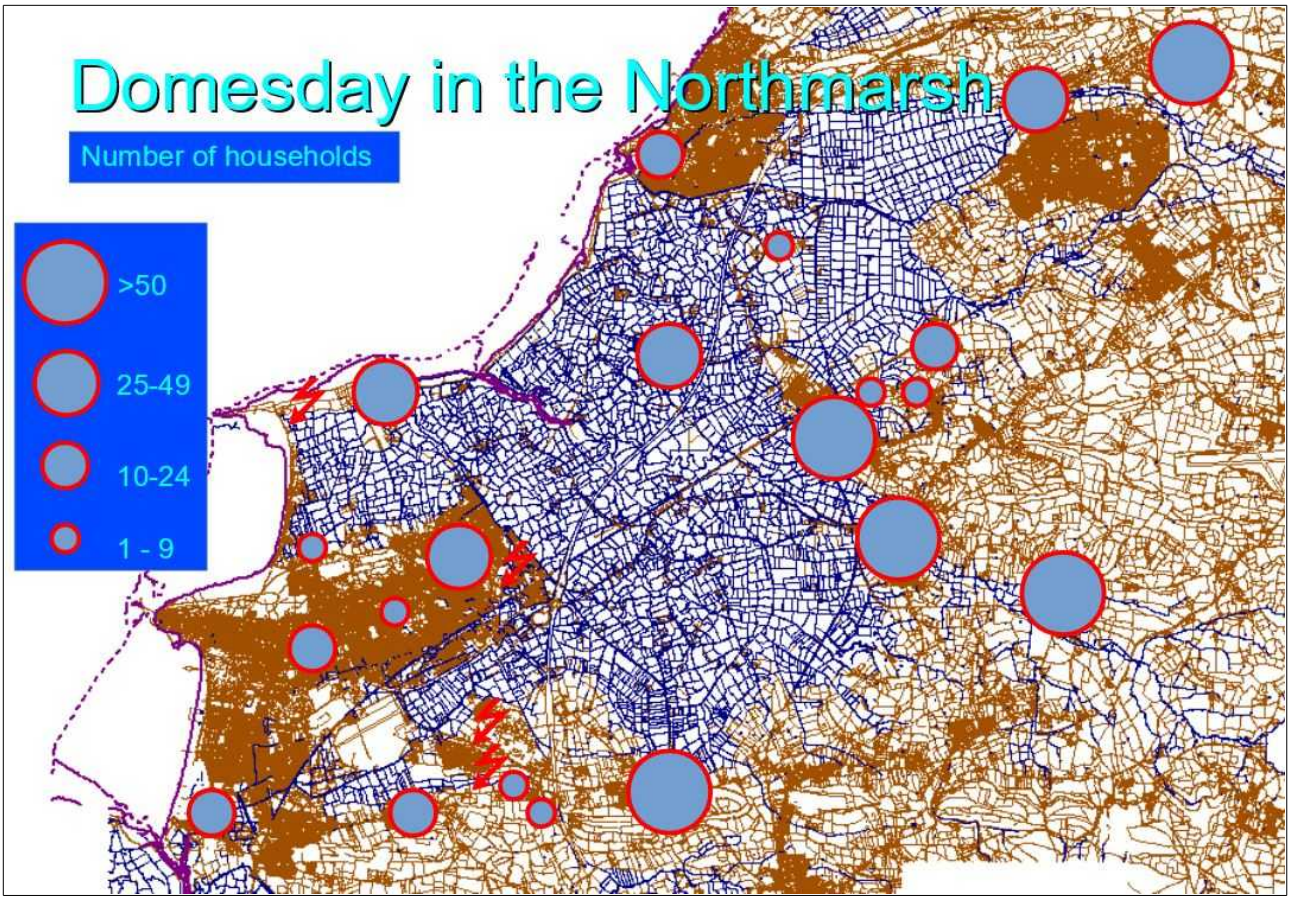

Fig 4: Populations in and around the Northmarsh 1086 (Domesday Book). Lightning flashes reference potential 11th century castle foundations as part of the Norman Conquest

Fig 4 draws attention to the obvious value of the Northmarsh. Large and small manors (Kingston Seymour, Kenn) can be seen in fig 4, while the wealth of the manors around the edges of the area, who obviously benefited from its pastoral agriculture (eg Yatton, Congresbury, Banwell, Worle and Worspring) are expressed in terms of number of families supported.

The inner moors (visible in the above as groups of geometric enclosures) are a result of much later agricultural changes.

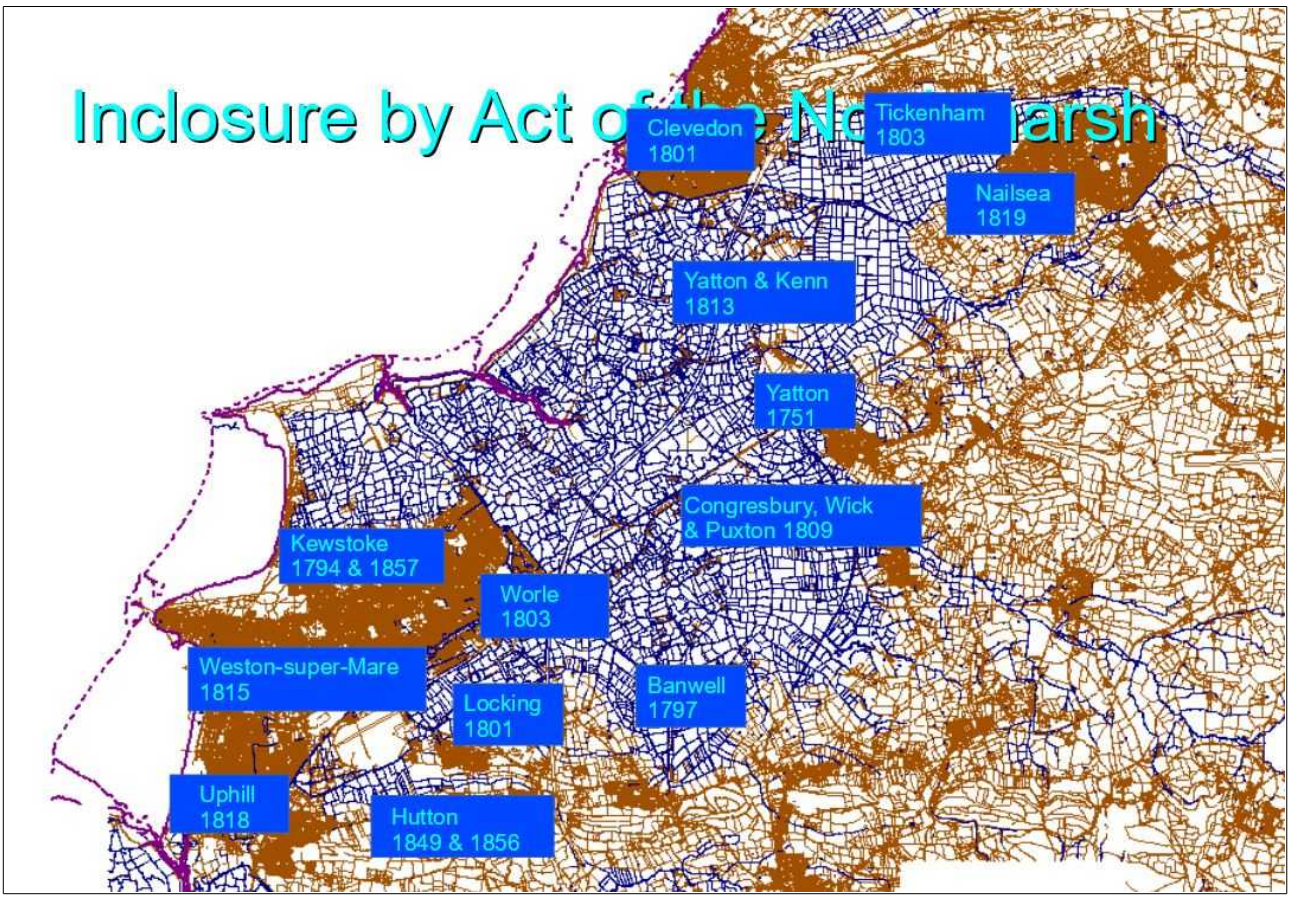

Fig 5: Parliamentary Inclosures in the inner Northmarsh, with dates

Note that for Congresbury, Wick (St Lawrence) & Puxton in 1809, the only Act involving lands in the outer areas, this is largely a case of 'tidying up' enclosures, such as wide roadsides and similar.

It seems likely, although absolute proof is currently lacking, that at least the original layout of the current landscape in Kingston must have begun around the 10th / early 11th century CE, since such development as has clearly been made by the mid-11th century to provide such wealth, has not obliterated the curvilinear natural drainage channels of the previous high saltmarsh, but has utilised them as drainage ditches.

This is not to say (of course) that there have not been changes in the use and structure of the landscape since that time, but that its basic form, established then, is still the basic form today, little or no significant change having occurred during the turmoil of the 14th century demographic emergency ('Black Death' etc), the Reformation of the 16th century, the Industrial Revolution or the industrial agriculture of the 20th century CE.

This important survival of pre-20th century landscapes can be demonstrated by comparing the landscape of c1900 and that of c2009 (Figs 8-9).

Later developments in the littoral landscapes are largely represented by finds of medieval and later pottery during building works (eg Clarke 1979; Clarke 1980a; Clarke 1980b), indicating the broad development of occupation in that period, and work by the Kingston Seymour History Society and YCCCART continues these investigations.

Lidar and current land conformation

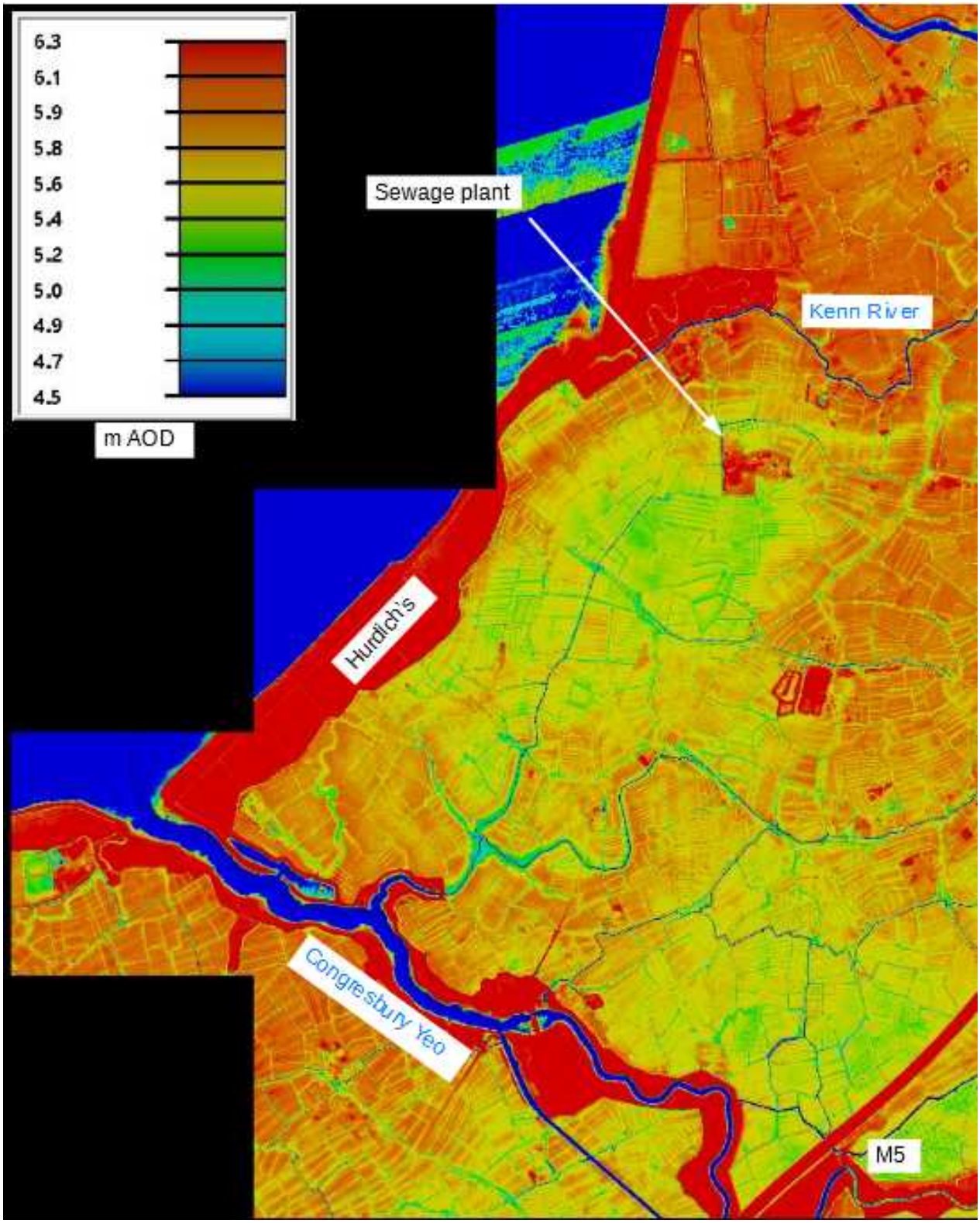

Fig 6: Coastal range of heights above Ordnance Datum (2009)

The process detailed above has resulted in the current landscape. A lidar survey (Environment Agency 2009 above) shows the relief of the parish (scale heights above Ordnance Datum - 'the greener the deeper'): these heights largely agree with the areas flooded in 1981 (below).

As can be seen from the figure 6, the raised areas of land alongside the Congresbury Yeo, along the Severn shore outside of the sea defences, and at the mouth of the Kenn River have been encouraged to accumulate silts and build up against flood.

The areas alongside the rivers were described as 'Saltings' on the OS plans (for example, OS Epoch 2 c1900), and the area around the mouth of the Kenn and outside of the sea defences from Kingston up the Clevedon Coast as far as Clevedon Pill, appear from ground inspection to still be saltmarsh.

Fig 7: Hurdiches and surroundings flooded in December 1981 (Photographs courtesy of David Crossman).

This photograph (Fig 7) shows the Hurdiches area (completely underwater) fufilling its intended role as a reservoir for excess water in time of flood: circumstances in December 1981 were absolutely exceptional, and flooding occurred despite this (YCCCART,

forthcoming).

Initial understanding of the survival of historic landscapes, and why that of Kingston Seymour is of very high status, in terms of its overall survival, and the quality of such, can be understood by knowing a little of the history of agriculture.

One of the problems of interpretation of medieval settlement in the Northmarsh is the continued expectation that historic settlements in North Somerset will conform to archaeologist's classifications as being of 'Midland-type'.

These are settlements which in the early medieval period changed their form from earlier, basically prehistoric, landscapes to nucleated villages and wide, expansive open fields, largely consisting of strips of land, alternating uses from year to year, and in some areas generating earthwork features (ridge and furrow), typical of prolonged arable cultivation in such open fields (Aston & Gerrard 2013).

These types of settlement are simply not seen in most of North Somerset UA: these conform far more to 'dispersed settlement', areas of much more mixed land uses, scattered farms and hamlets.

The picture has been complicated by the enormous infilling of historic villages since the 19th century, but the pastoral farming dictated by environmental conditions in littoral parishes of the Northmarsh does not generate such open landscapes anyway, one important reason being the lack of need for grazing on the stubble of open fields, since the existence of commons in the adjacent inner manors make this unnecessary.

For largely economic reasons, based on the ease of quantifying the output from arable farming, and the less simple quantification of that of pastoral agriculture, non-arable farming has always 'taken a back seat', both in terms of governance (a disjoint that extends back to King William's Domesday Book in 1086, and beyond) and in eduation of the general public, where the general image of a thriving agriculture tends to be that of a waving field of ripe 'corn', and 'putting bread on the table' a euphemism for agricultural endeavour.

This has drastic effects, both on government policy, and on the preservation and conservation of historic landscape and countryside. The effects of huge-scale arable farming were rather stridently pointed out as long ago as 1980 by Marion Shoard in 'The Theft of the Countryside'. While this broadside did not look beyond agriculture to the wider and deeper causes of such malaise, it was a wake-up call to those living in the arable (eastern and climatically drier) parts of England.

Her thesis was undoubtedly correct, though, in pointing out the effects of 'industrial' agriculture on the landscape which in the early 20th century had still reflected the activities of centuries (or even millennia) of previous farmers. Even a casual perusal of the RAF aerial photographs of the late 1940s, by comparison with modern images from (say) Google Earth, will illustrate the profound changes in arable areas, such as field consolidation, removal of earthworks of previous generations of rural activity, sometimes extending to the obliteration of physical remains of whole villages, and of landscape change on a colossal scale.

This largely applies in arable farming areas, where Shoard was addressing the issue. Some aspects (such as central government encouragement of hedgerow removal, orchard obliteration, and inappropriate underdraining) did extend to some extent into pastoral farming areas, and it is those areas that are the subject of this note.

It need hardly be added that the 'infrastructure' developments of urban expansion (of which Weston-super-Mare is a prime local example, although Bristol is also a local example who's drastic effects on the surrounding hinterland can be traced back almost to its origins in the 10th century CE) are destructive of rural landscape in Somerset and other adjacent counties, however much recent local arrangements alter their names and management by local government.

Historic Landscape Characterisation

Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) might well be a useful tool in assessing the importance of, and potential effects on, heritage assets and associated landscapes at some point, but for reasons stated below, it is not yet in a sufficiently mature state to be so used in the case of Kingston.

Historic England (formerly English Heritage) have taken a lead role in developing HLC, an originally largely map-based procedure aiming to identify and characterise areas of countryside (and townscape) with similar development histories and modern sensitivities to change.

This began in a small way in the 1990s (Avon CC was one of the first county-wide studies to be undertaken, between approximately 1995 and 1998), with such definitions: a view of this data can be consulted on the North Somerset HER (map.n-somerset.gov.uk/her.html Map legend click 'Historic Landscape Characterisation). This dataset is now 30 years old, and inevitably has flaws, not least that the use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) in managing heritage information for HERs and adjoining projects, was at that time in its infancy.

HLC has potential to be an asset in overall consideration of local landscapes, historic significance and potential effects of proposed developments within those landscapes, but needs significant upgrading in the 'Avon' area to be useful in such considerations.

Among the quotable material in HER25 (below) is

[To address the] idea that 'all landscapes matter' was the concept of characterisation: a seamless mapping of the continuous historic character of the landscape (or seascape) designed to emphasise that the historic environment is everywhere. However, its main product, Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) is generally confined to the visible landscape and does not include buried archaeology.

Since this time, and after some criticism by Rippon, among others (Rippon 2006b), Historic England have pursued HLC with some enthusiasm, as a way of potentially predicting and mitigating historic environment effects in light of modern landscape trends, such as increased woodland planting, rewilding and so on. A very useful guide to current work in the area is given by an overview in Historic England Research Issue 25 (2023): (https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/historic-england-research-25/).

Such initiatives, however, are predicated on the availability of significant original data being available to inform the works in the first place: the least that can be said about the HLC information for Kingston as it stands is that it was acceptable for its time. Attempts to predict sensitivity of heritage sites, and to predict their occurrence and likely condition are premature, appropriately being effectively confined to areas where such projects have been developing since the 1990s, such information and initiatives not being at present available in northern Somerset.

Changes to historic landscape

As Marian Shoard pointed out as long ago as 1980

England's countryside is not only one of the great treasures of the earth; it is also a vital part of our national identity...virtually all of us know and value the world's most celebrated landscape and cherish rural England's patchwork quilt of fields, downs and woods, separated by thick hedgerows, mossy banks, sunken lanes and sparkling streams. Peopled by badgers, skylarks and nightingales, scattered with bluebells, poppies and cornflowers and studded with oak, elm and hawthorn, our countryside has knitted itself into our idea of ourselves as a nation. (Shoard 1980)

Historic landscape is perhaps defined as:

'Extensive landscape containing surviving features of various dates, which contribute to the understanding of the development, heritage and biodiversity status and current appearance of that landscape, and which also contribute to the future management of that landscape to maintain its current importance into the future, including current land management where it supports the maintenance of such importance'

Shoard's rather purple prose, although designed to meet the conditions of landscape changes in eastern England in the 1970s and 1980s, fits well into the pastoral landscapes of the West Country, which benefit by protection from unnecessary loss. Such loss of such historic landscape can be caused in several ways:

1. **Urban expansion**. This important reason for loss of historic landscape, whether by housing, industrial or infrastructure construction, is illustrated by the attached figures relating to the local urban expansion of Weston-super-Mare and Clevedon, but can be identified around the edges of any modern urban area. The construction of the M5 in the early 1970s, or the development of the rural areas around Avonmouth northwest of Bristol in the 20th and 21st centuries, and their associated road constructions in the late 20th, are infrastructure examples. More insidious is 'infill development' in rural settlements, often leading to 'urbanisation' or other social ills.

2. **Changes in agricultural practice**. These changes, often driven by greater outside social changes, include the conversion of huge swathes of landscape from previously mixed to arable farming, such as has been seen in the Fens, or other large areas of East Anglia and other parts of eastern England. Where such changes do not occur, or are minimal, as in largely pastoral Kingston Seymour, historic landscapes have tended to retain the significant heritage and biodiversity benefits of the continuation of such landscapes in good heart, such as the naturally derived ditches and broad accompanying hedges which characterise that landscape.

3. **Inappropriate changes imposed for other financial or community reasons**, such as reservoir or fishing lake construction, conversion to golf courses, or other changes driven by factors that have nothing to do with the landscape under consideration, where such changes are not included within historic landscapes, but require complete destruction of the part of the historic landscape and related areas where the footprint of the project lies.

General loss

A general indication as to the survival of historic landscape in Kingston, and its extirpation in other areas, is easily gained by comparison of the survival of field boundaries between the OS Epoch plans of c1900, and the OS digital data of c2009. These span the era of industrial farming, urban expansion and infrastructure creation, such as new roads and new housing, typified in North Somerset by the creation of the M5 in the early 1970s, the expansion of Worle between the 1970s and the present day, or even the current creation of the Banwell by-pass.

Kingston

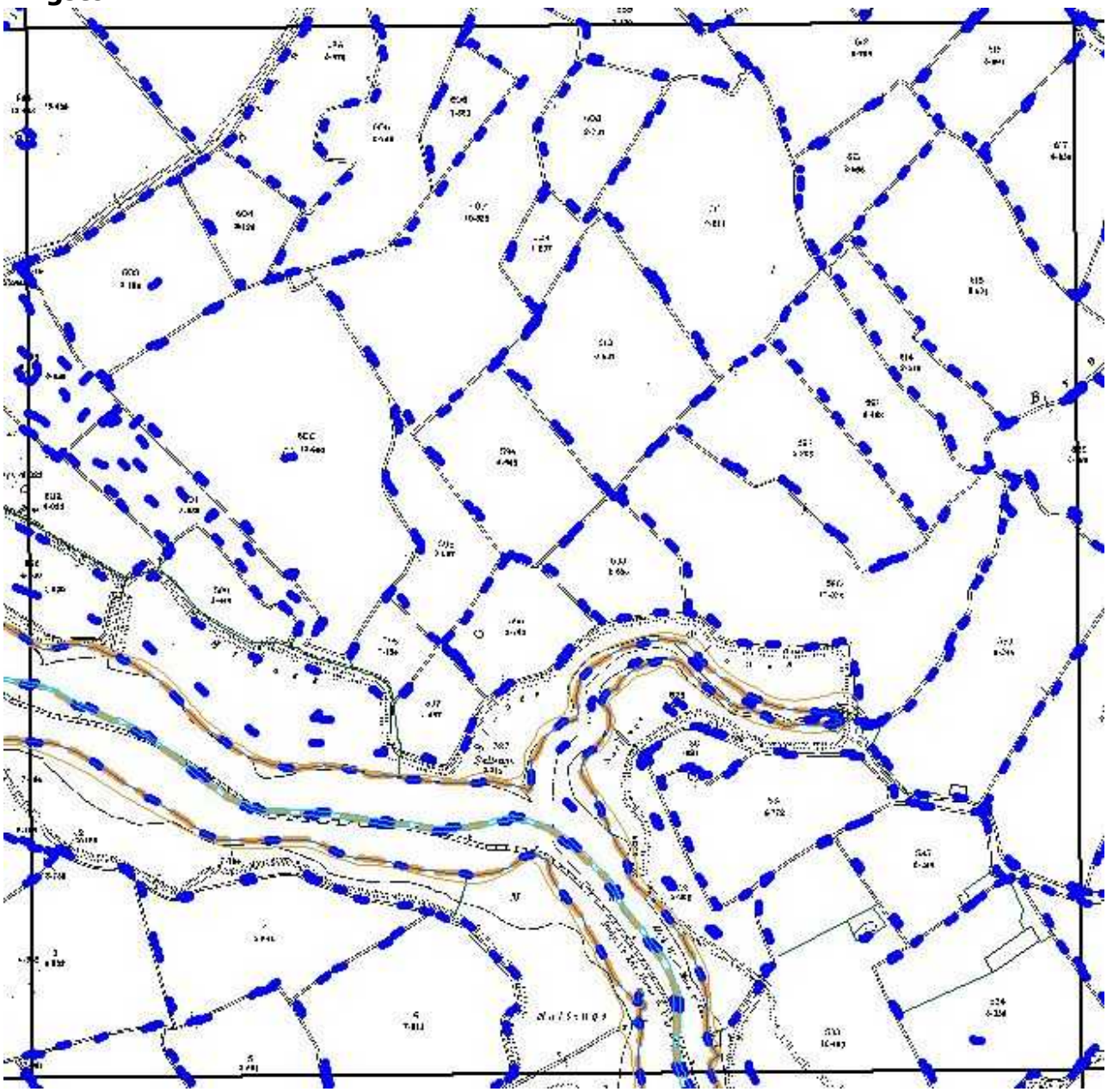

Fig 8: Comparison of c1900 and c2009 field boundaries in OS 1km grid square ST3766
Broken blue lines: 2009 ditched field boundaries
Background lines: c1900 ditched field boundaries
Area lies between Congresbury Yeo and Ham Lane.

The grid contained 5.8km of ditches and 1.1 km fence, totalling 6.9km. The OS Epoch 2 map included 6.7km, indicating a slight gain in the course of the 20th century.

It is manifestly clear that the vast majority (as will see, well over 95%) of field boundaries survived the 20th century, and are still extant today.

A second adjoining grid illustrates that this is no fluke or accident of choice of map area:

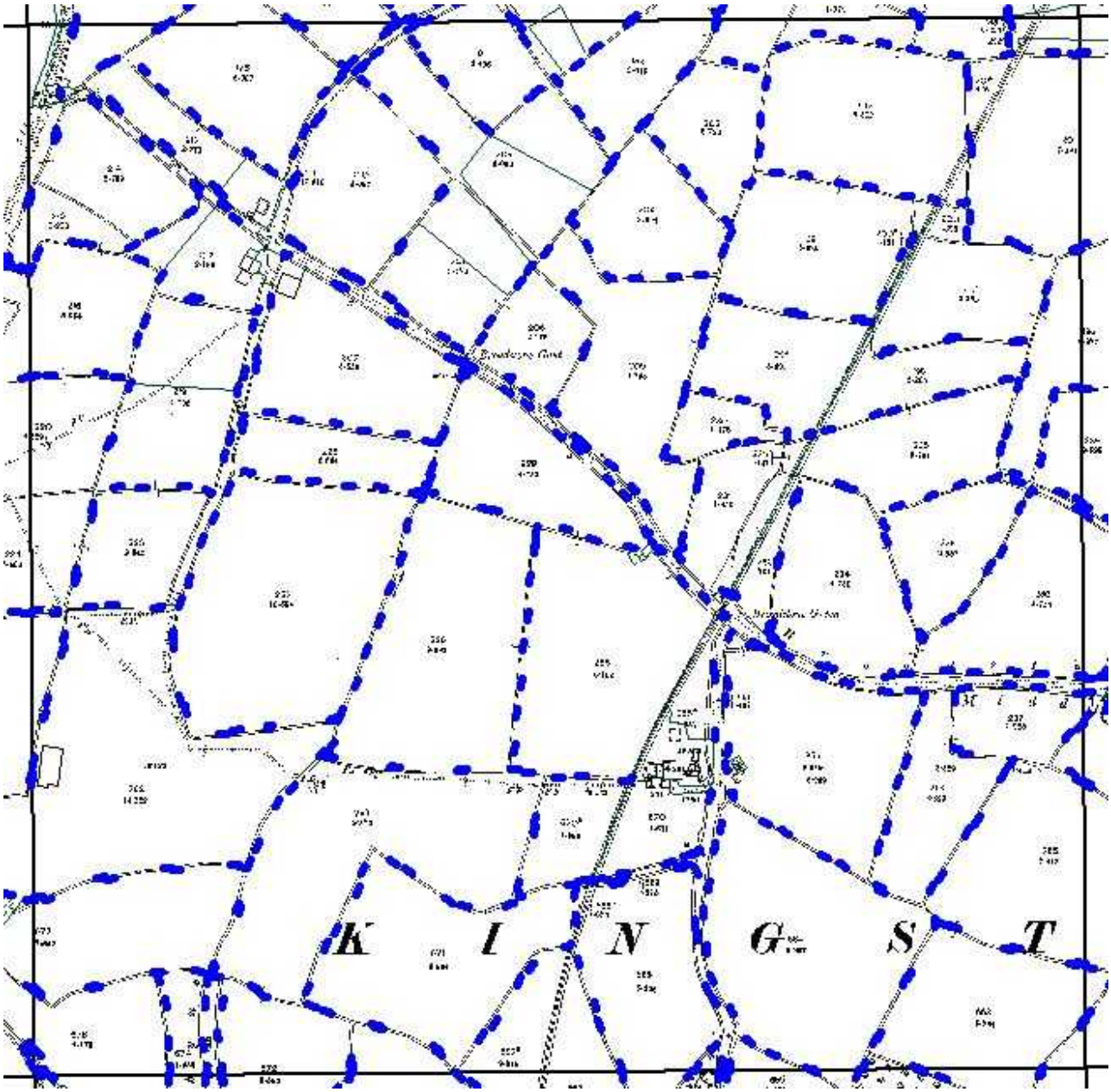

Fig 9: Comparison of c1900 and c2009 field boundaries in OS 1km grid square ST3867
Broken blue lines: 2009 ditched field boundaries
Background lines: c1900 ditched field boundaries
Area lies either side of Middle Lane

This grid contained c3.3km of ditches and c 1.0km of fence/hedge: the Epoch 2 OS plan recorded some 4.0km of boundaries, the differences largely being due to the line of the WC&P light railway (extant 1897-1940), whose fences remain in place in some areas.

The few non-ditch boundaries (mainly hedges and/or modern fences) have thefore if anything, increased in the 20th and early 21st centuries. This survival of field boundaries is an appropriate representation of the survival of historic landscapes, since it largely illustrates the continuity of field form and layout, and lack of such prarie-style wholesale removal of boundaries with which we have become familiar in eastern regions of England.

Comparisons

A comparison with a random 1km grid in the vicinity of Weston-super-Mare is below:

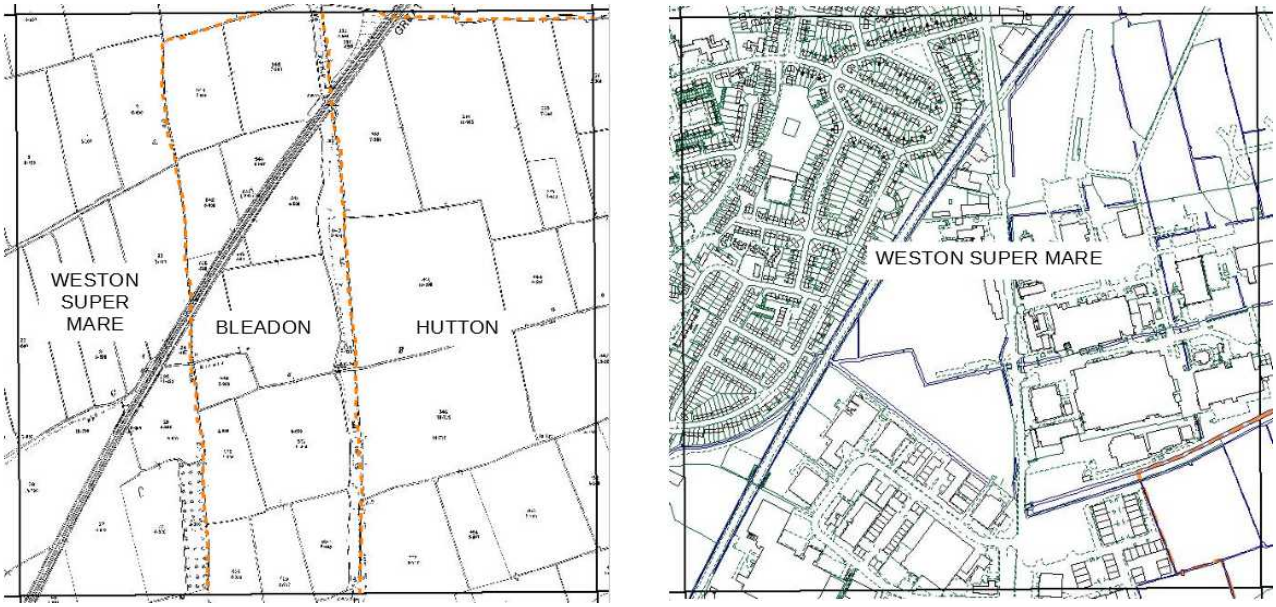

Fig 10: Comparison of outskirts of Weston-super-Mare (left) in c1900 (OS Epoch 2), with 2009 (OS digital data) (right). Further significant expansion has happened since 2009

This comparison is simply to point out the loss of historic landscape fabric in urban expansion: examples closer to the centre of Weston-super-Mare are pointless, since while a very little historic landscape survived in the above grid square in 2009, in central Weston it has been completely eliminated.

The special example of the expansion of Weston-super-Mare, since its origins before the 19th century as a normal agricultural village of the Severn shore, is entirely relevant to this case, since it documents how easily square kilometres of landscape can be lost to urban expansion.

In 1838, Weston parish was depicted on the Tithe Map (Fig 11): although development of the town had already begun, with streets laid in urban form to the south of the pre-existing village, the whole developed area is tiny.

Over the next 180 years, the town expanded, largely over low-lying areas of historic landscape, with increasing speed and areal cover. Virtually none of this area was surveyed before development, nor was any of it subject to archaeological watching brief until the very end of the 20th century. The expansion is depicted in Fig 12: the red box in the plan is the extent of the Tithe Map shown in the previous Fig 11, after filling which the town subsequently expanded during the 20th century over large parts of the parishes of

Fig 11: Weston-super-Mare from the Tithe Map of 1838 (SHC D/D/rt/M/22)

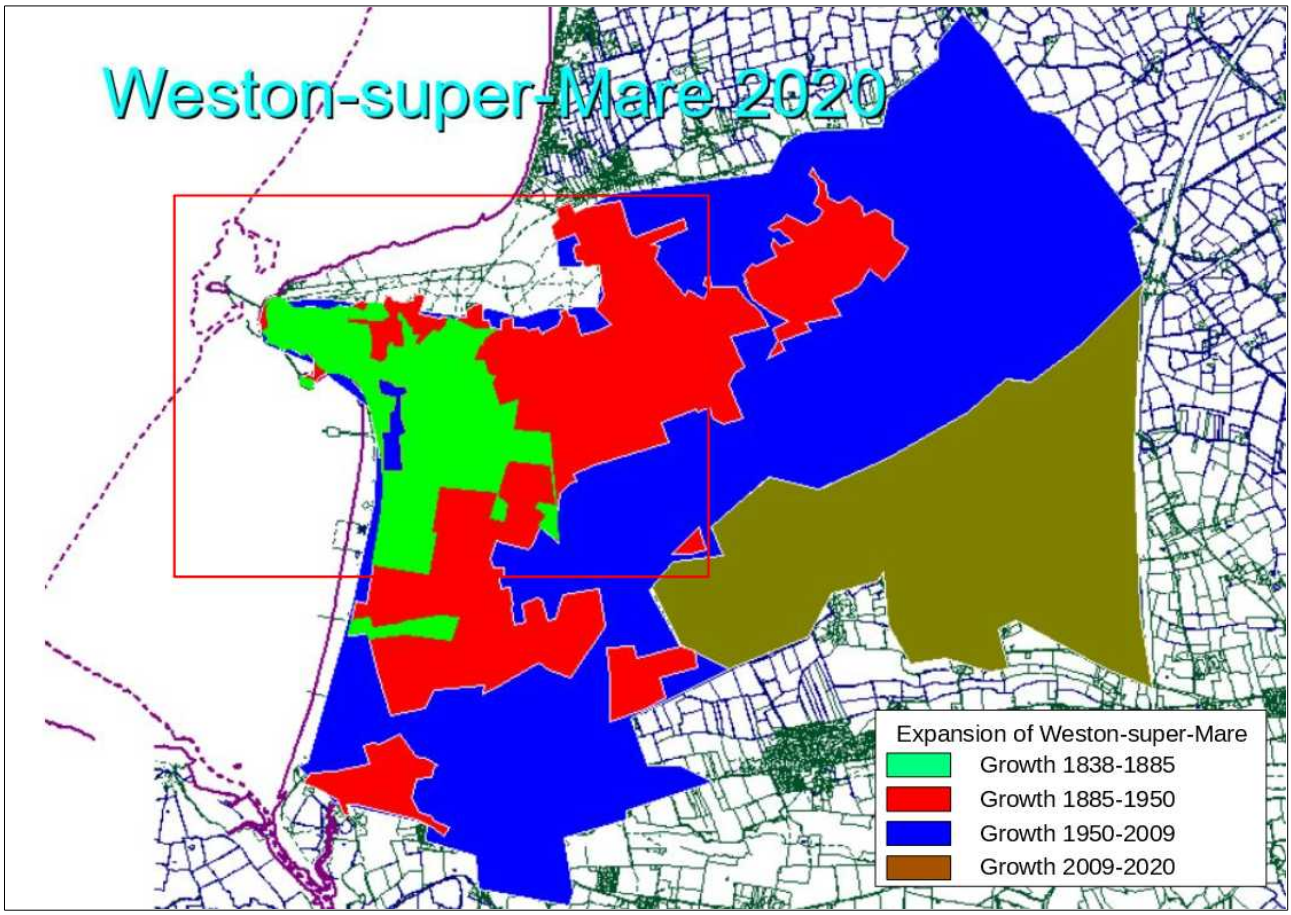

Fig 12: Growth of Weston-super-Mare 1838-2020 (from OS plans): Note the first three time periods are of 50-60 years: the 21st century period is only 11.

Kewstoke, Worle and Uphill, and during the 21st of further areas of St Georges (formerly part of Banwell) and Locking.

This development largely obliterated previous historic landscapes, whether ancient or the result of 19th century enclosure.

This urban obliteration is not limited to Weston-super-Mare: an example from the smaller urban settlement of Clevedon is included below (Fig 13).

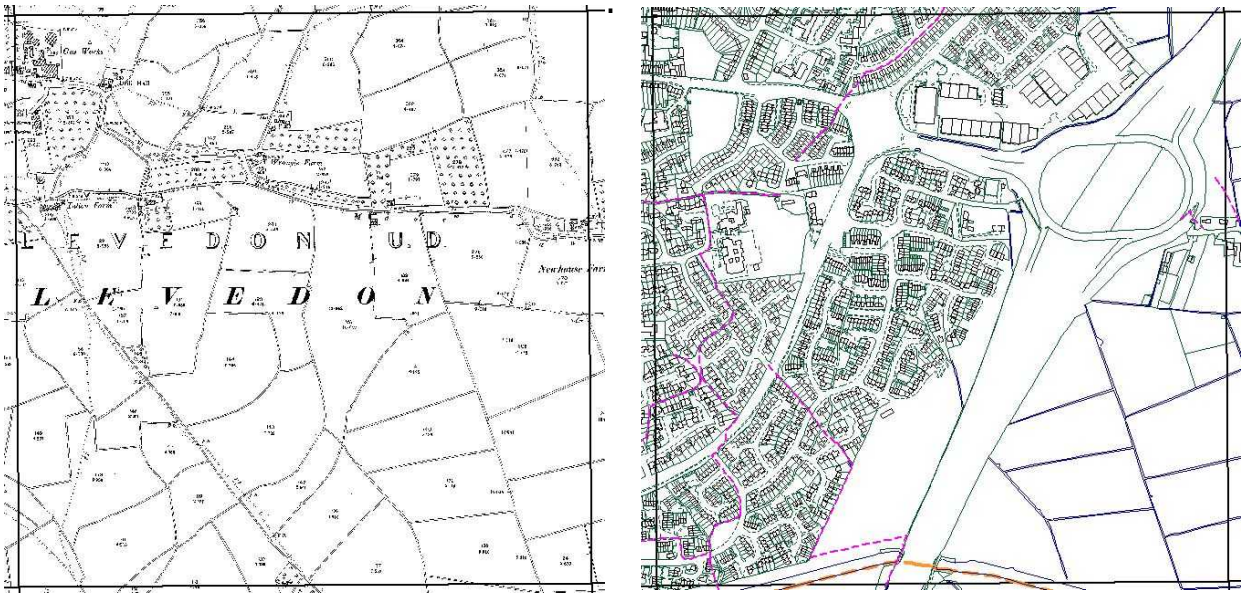

Fig 13: Comparison of outskirts of Clevedon (left) in c1900 (OS Epoch 2), with 2009 (OS digital data) (right).

Even a rapid survey of Historic Environment Records (for example Somerset (somersetheritage.org.uk) - or Know Your Place (maps.bristol.gov.uk/kyp) where HER records and modern landscapes can be easily compared with historic OS maps, show the loss of complexity and of historic landscape over the past century, and comparisons of areas more arable in nature (such as Shapwick in Somerset, or Marshfield in South Gloucestershire) with those more pastoral (Berrow in Somerset or ...well, it is difficult to find examples in other LAs that compare with the historic landscape of Kingston).

This is not to stray into the devastated landscapes of the Fens, East Anglia or even Romney Marsh, where simple examination of maps will make the loss of historic landscape in not dissimilar environments immediately apparent.

Other infrastructure losses

As previously mentioned, other non-agricultural developments can often pose a threat to the survival of historic landscapes.

A typical case in the local area is the construction of the M5 in the early 1970s. An interchange and part of the approach roads for the M5 can be seen in Fig 13 above.

A group of local volunteer archaeologists, guided by some local academics and organised by Peter Fowler (then at Bristol University) recorded some features before construction began, and works during development of the road structures. The construction involved 165km of road construction, 16 major junctions, a number of connection road links to pre-

existing roads, and four service areas (Dawson et al 2001).

Even in the 1970s, the Health and Safety aspects of this were a limiting factor in how effective this recording could be.

The recording area ran from Gloucestershire, through Bristol into Somerset, and various areas were excavated, surveyed and fieldwalked. Unfortunately, like so many early projects of this nature, little thought was given to resulting publication, and much of the information collected was subsequently lost.

Despite praiseworthy efforts to recover such detail as could be recovered (Dawson et al 2001). much was lost: publication and promulgation to the public are still problematic in such studies.

Other inappropriate changes to land uses are equally damaging or destructive to the heritage, biodiversity and historic landscape of long-established agricultural areas. Clearly, excavation of lakes or ponds (leaving economic or secondary wildlife considerations completely aside) are very destructive to the heritage of the chosen area: inappropriate woodland planting in wetland areas can in the long term result in moisture loss by transpiration as the trees mature, reducing the potential for survival of waterlogged material, such as organic remains or historic and environmental indicators.

Fortunately, the work of earlier archaeologists, such as Gerald Harris, Ken Stuckey, Marie Clarke and Keith Gardner (none of whom are still with us) and the preservation of their written archives, have made results of work at Kingston richer and fuller than would otherwise have been possible. In particular, the work of Harris and Stuckey on the coastal defences of Kingston have made further work possible, which is underway as this report appears: comparisons with Uphill and Wick St Lawrence, where similar organisation of sea defences apparently existed, shows how greatly their work has increased the value of work today: let this be a lesson in the value of preservation of written archives!

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YCCCART 2023	Geophysical survey at Longworth, Ham lane, Kingston Seymour *Available at ycccart.co.uk*
YCCCART, forthcoming	Watery tales: coastal flooding in northern Somerset up to and including the Flood Event of 1981 *To be available at ycccart.co.uk*

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