English Heritage Extensive Urban Survey

An archaeological assessment of

Axbridge

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SOMERSET

County Council

SOMERSET EXTENSIVE URBAN SURVEY

AXBRIDGE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

by Miranda Richardson

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

Somerset County Council would like to thank all the people who assisted in the compiling or editing of this report.

I. INTRODUCTION

This report forms one of a series commissioned by English Heritage and prepared by Somerset County Council with the aim of assessing urban archaeology as part of the Monuments Protection Programme. The work was carried out from 1994 to 1998 by Clare Gathercole and Miranda Richardson (from 1996), managed by Chris Webster. The reports are essentially as completed during that period but have been updated by Chris Webster with new archaeological information in early 2001.

English Heritage has funded two programmes assess the urban archaeological resource - intensive and extensive. The former is restricted to the major historic cities, characterised by a great depth of archaeological remains, a wealth of historical documentation and in many cases, by a great deal of archaeological investigation. The extensive urban surveys cover the smaller towns and are based on information in the local Sites and Monuments Record with limited amounts of new information collected during the project. Once the information has been collected and mapped, attention is focused on the analysis of the town plan and defining topographic units within the town. This will lead to the preparation of guidance for planners, developers and others involved in the management of the town.

II. MAJOR SOURCES

1. Primary documents
Axbridge is recorded in the early 10th century Burghal Hideage and the Domesday Book and is richly endowed with royal charters and borough records throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods. The Axbridge Chronicle, a 14th or 15th century compilation of earlier documents, retells the histories of King Edmund and St. Dunstan, in places substituting Axbridge for Cheddar.

2. Local histories
There is no single local history although many short articles about the town have been published by the Axbridge Archaeology and Local History Society.

3. Maps
Axbridge is shown as a town, significantly larger than Cheddar on Saxton's Atlas of England and Wales c.1588 (reproduced in Blair 1996:109). There are no early town maps of Axbridge itself although a small section of the modern town is shown on the Verry's 1788 Cheddar Estate Map. It is shown on both Day and Masters 1782 and Greenwood's 1822 county maps of Somerset. Other than the 1839 Tithe map and the OS series no further maps have been used.

III. A BRIEF HISTORY OF AXBRIDGE
Axbridge is situated on the southern fringe of Mendip, to the north of the town is the steeply sloping Axbridge hill, rising to over 230m, to the south the flat moorland of the Axe Valley. A low spur of dry land projects into the moor which may have been the area of initial settlement. Despite the town's name the river Axe lies over 1.5km to the south, although an earlier course may have come closer to the town. The medieval town lies strung out along the main road running along the foot of the hills, linking Cheddar to the coast.

The Mendip Hills are noted for their limestone caves, some of which have produced evidence of use in both the prehistoric and historic periods.

Until recent years only a few Roman sherds and coins had been found in residual contexts within the town. However excavations in 1989 and 1992 have produced *in situ* Romano-British features and raised the expectation that the site was settled during this period. The surrounding area was certainly occupied in the Roman period; to the south of the town a series of earth-bound features seen on aerial photographs have been interpreted as representing a complex Romano-British landscape (SMR 11224) and Roman occupation is attested to the north at Rose Wood (SMR 10056).

It is the Saxon and earlier medieval archaeology for which Axbridge is better known, however this is largely due the documentary sources rather than archaeological discoveries. The town was recorded as a burh in the early 10th century Burghal Hideage, presumably defending the western route to the royal residence at Cheddar. It has been suggested (Blair 1996:120) that the foundation of the borough of Axbridge was connected to restructuring of royal assets involving a shift in focus of royal residence from Wedmore to Cheddar at the beginning of the 10th century. As has been noted elsewhere in the county at Somerton and Langport, the founding of Axbridge may reflect a preference to distance commercial activities from the royal residence. The Axbridge Chronicle makes the relationship between these two explicit as it describes how goods collected but not used in the King's round would be sold in the borough market (Rahtz 1979:10). A mint was known to have operated at Axbridge between 997-1003 and 1017-1038, with 22 coins recorded (Bromwich 1971). At Domesday it is described as a borough under the royal manor of Cheddar with 32 burgesses paying 20 shillings, 2 mills and 3 fisheries.

A series of charters records the history of the borough through the medieval period. In *c.*1204 King John passed the manor of Cheddar to the Bishop of Bath and Wells and a charter of this date confirms the Axbridge Burgesses' rights to a market and other privileges such as exemption from county jury service and freedom from interference from the county sheriff, thus confirming the towns legal and economic independence whilst it remained part of the estate. In 1229 a charter of Henry II freed Axbridge traders from tolls and a fair was granted in 1239 both showing Axbridge continued to be an important market. By the 14th century Axbridge was a well established cloth trading town using overland routes to Bristol and the river ports on the Axe (Rackley, Lower Weare and possible wharves on the Axe to the south of the town). The prosperity of the town in the later medieval period is reflected in the high quality of surviving buildings of this period.

In 1557 a charter of Mary I transformed the Craft Guild into a Borough Corporation with a Mayor, and in 1599 Elizabeth I granted a second market day. On the back of this charter is a descriptive perambulation of the 'Liberties of Axbridge', which describes a long thin area lying north-south from the top of Axbridge Hill down to Portmeade Ditch. The perambulation appears to cross the town on the west side at the junction of High Street and West Street, excluding the latter. Although the town had clearly expanded along West Street in the medieval period it was not until the early 17th century that a charter was granted which brought West Street into the area of the borough of Axbridge. Despite there being evidence of much rebuilding and particularly re-facing of buildings in Axbridge in the 17th century the decline of the cloth industry was to bring the demise of the town as an important trading centre.

Neither of the 19th century turnpiked roads in the vicinity were diverted through the town centre and the Cheddar Valley and Yatton Branch of the GWR railway which passed on the northern edge of the town was short lived built in 1869 and closed in 1963.

Very little rebuilding has taken place in the centre of Axbridge, as shown by the large number of early listed buildings lining the main streets.

IV. THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF AXBRIDGE

GENERAL COMMENTS

0.1 Archaeological work in the town
The Axbridge Caving Group and Archaeology Society has inspired local interest in the town's rich history since the 1950s, publishing a monthly newsletter and occasional journal almost continually to the present day. Now known as the

Axbridge Archaeology and Local History Society the group has undertaken several small scale excavations in the town centre, together with building and churchyard recording and many individual research projects.

0.2 Standing structures and visible remains
Although evidence of the earliest settlement is not visible today many medieval buildings survive although most have under gone alteration and re-fronting. There are 85 listed buildings in the town, several of which have been the subject of survey conducted by the Somerset Vernacular Architecture Group (unpublished reports in SRO).

1. PREHISTORIC
(Map A)

1.1 Archaeological work in the town/ Archaeological knowledge
Although there has been some investigation of the surrounding cave sites, particularly in the earlier years of the Axbridge society, there is no record of investigation of prehistoric features in the immediate vicinity of the town.

1.2 Context
Axbridge is one of 37 of the 45 historic towns covered by this project at which there is as yet no strong evidence of prehistoric settlement on the site of the later town - though it should be remembered that it is notoriously difficult for archaeologists to demonstrate a prehistoric presence in modern urban areas. Whilst 'towns' were not, generally speaking, a feature of prehistoric landscapes, many of the same factors which made the site desirable in later periods would already have been operative. The Mendip upland sites above Axbridge - which include nationally important occupation and burial sites dating from the palaeolithic period onwards, and provide evidence of connections with dominant neolithic and bronze age cultures to the east - are likely to represent but a partial survival of a wider landscape which included the fertile Mendip-foot shelf.

1.3 Archaeological features, *shown on* **Map A**
1.3.a Artefact scatters (SMR 10073)
AXB/101   Flints were apparently found at this cave site just to the north of Axbridge.

Taken from SMR map.

2. ROMAN
(Map A)

2.1 Archaeological work in the town/ Archaeological knowledge
Two relatively recent excavations have produced *in situ* Roman features; the first (Russett 1989:4-6), a rescue excavation, produced evidence of a single Roman burial. The second (Broomhead 1992), showed a ditch cut from below medieval layers, which contained Romano-British pottery. It may be significant that these sites are close together and situated on the slight spur of land projecting into the moor which is considered by some to be the area of Saxon occupation. Other excavations in the town have produced a few Romano-British pottery sherds in residual contexts (Everton 1977) and a number of stray finds of Roman date are recorded in the SMR. Further Roman material was discovered during an evaluation excavation in the south east of the town in 2000 (Broomhead 2000).

2.2 Context
The Roman period was one of deliberate, strategic urbanisation. The area which is now Somerset appears to have been less affected than some other areas by this, in that few really urban sites are known, and this probably reflects its marginal position. However, the widespread distribution of Roman or Romanised settlements shows that the county - particularly east of the Parrett - was heavily populated and exploited in this period.

Axbridge is one of twelve of the 45 historic towns covered by this project in which there is evidence of Roman settlement in the area of the later town, though not necessarily at its core. In this area, a minor complex of settlements bordered the Axe Valley and lay on the fertile land at the foot of the Mendips, below the mining areas at Charterhouse.

2.3 Archaeological features, *shown on* **Map A**

2.3.a Burial sites, religious houses and places of worship

AXB/201   Burial Site (SMR 12778)

An individual burial of a Romano-British male was found in poor preservation in extreme rescue conditions at a depth of 1.5m below the modern ground surface, during excavation of an inspection hole in a garage at Elm House, Old Church Street. It is not clear from this limited excavation whether this is truly a single burial or forms part of a larger cemetery. The owners of Elm House have commemorated the discovery of the burial in their garage by sculpting a figure on the south wall of their home (V. Russett *pers comm*)

After Russett 1989:4

2.3.b Settlement

AXB/204   Mendip Lodge

It has been suggested that there was Roman occupation in this location although this has yet to be proven (V. Russett *pers comm*).

(a) Unclassified

AXB/202   Roman Ditch (SMR 12755)

A narrow ditch of Roman date was found during a watching brief at Axbridge Primary School in 1992 (Broomhead 1992). It is as yet unclear whether this ditch formed part of a settlement boundary or field system. It may be related to the burial site found immediately to the north.

After Broomhead 1992.

Roman Ditch (SMR 44903)

During anarchaeological evaluation at Cheddar Road Farm in 2000 another Roman ditch was recorded.To the north of this was part of a rectangular feature of uncertain function bounded by vertically set stones.

After Broomhead 2000

2.3.c Artefact scatters

AXB/203   Roman Coins and Pottery (SMR 11409, 12776)

Roman coins and abraded pottery were found in excavations on Meadow Street (Weare 1957), 26 High Street (Everton 1978:7), and a few sherds in excavations in the car park on Moorland Lane and 23 West Street, in all cases in residual contexts (Everton 1977).

not mapped   Roman Coins (SMR 10067)

A number of coins have apparently been found in the area which were displayed at Axbridge in 1869.

not mapped   Romano-British Bracelet

A Romano-British bracelet was apparently found in a stream bed on a new housing estate at Walnut Tree Farm in 1977 (Everton 1977), the precise location is not known.

3. SAXON
(Map B)

3.1 Archaeological work in the town/ Archaeological knowledge

None of the archaeological interventions have produced finds or features connected with either the burh defences or settlement within them.

3.2 Context

Though the Post-Roman and early Saxon periods were characterised by a return to non-urban lifestyles, the later Saxon period (from the 9th century onwards) saw the beginnings of a resurgence of trading places and towns. This was controlled, in England, by the Saxon royal families (though it was part of a wider trend), and took place in the context of a network of royal estate administration centres which was already established (in some cases long-established). The reasons for the changes were many and complex, combining defensive, adminstrative and ecclesiastical considerations with, increasingly, purely commercial aspirations. As one of the heartlands of the kings of Wessex, Somerset played an important part in the early re-urbanisation of the south, and there are a number of places amongst those studied for this project which can claim to have been towns before the Norman Conquest.

Axbridge is one of fifteen out of the 45 historic towns covered by this project which already had some urban functions or features before the Conquest. In fact, it is one of six boroughs recorded in the Domesday Survey, all of which were established as commercial annexes from adjacent royal estate centres. Axbridge was one of the smaller boroughs, having been set up in one of the four *burhs* (fortified sites) in the survey, which in this case was linked to the royal estate centres of Cheddar and Wedmore (one of three such pairings, the others being Watchet/ Williton and Langport/ Somerton). It is also one of eleven towns which may have had a mint in the 10th or 11th centuries, and one of nine in which possible signs of pre-Conquest planning have been noted in the Assessments.

3.3 Standing structures and visible remains
There are no standing visible remains of the Saxon burh defences or other Saxon building remains.

3.4 Archaeological features, shown on Map B
3.4.a Communications
(a) Roads, streets and routeways

AXB/302   <u>Cross Lane/Cheddar Road</u>
This is thought to have been an early routeway along the southern edge of the Mendips linking Cheddar to the coast on the west.

Taken from OS Surveyor's Drawings 1811.

AXB/305   <u>Moorland Lane</u>
Batt (1975) has suggested that this road formed the main artery of the Saxon burh and the main route to Cheddar crossing the moor.

This line is conjectural

3.4.b Defensive sites

AXB/301   <u>Axbridge Burh</u> (SMR 11408)
Axbridge is mentioned in the early 10th century Burghal Hideage with 400 hides which should correspond to 500 metres of burh defences. It is thought to have been part of the defensive system established by King Alfred, in this case, with the aim of protecting access to Cheddar. It is, however, an unusual location for a defensive burh; it is overlooked on the north side from the Mendip Hills, the modern town is strung along the east-west road with no obvious defensible area and no remains of earthwork defences have as yet been recognised in the town. In addition, none of the small scale excavations in the town have produced evidence of defences or settlement in this period. Therefore the possibility that the burh lay outside the present town should not be discounted. This said, two areas within the town been suggested as possible sites for the burh.

Batt (1975) suggests that the burh was positioned to the south of the market square covering the low spur of flat land that projects into the moor along Moorland Lane. The perimeter of this area measures *c.*513m and is therefore comparable with the area described in the Burghal Hideage. This position would have allowed control over the east-west route as well as being provided with some natural defences on the west and south sides by the boggy ground. However, no protection is evident on the west side as the land rises from Moorland Lane across The Furlong playing field. The modern street and plot pattern is rectangular which may conform to an earlier defensive layout. Batt suggests the main road to Cheddar originally followed the line of High Street then joined directly with

Moorland Lane, (rather than kinking to join The Square), leaving the town to the south and crossing the moor as shown on the 1782 Day and Masters map of Somerset. If this was the main road it makes sense that the settlement would lie along it. However neither the 1788 Cheddar Estate Map, the 1811 OS Surveyor's Drawings nor the 1822 map of Somerset by Greenwood show this road completely or give it prominence over the more northerly route.

The position of the church outside the burh defences is also unusual and raises the possibility of an alternative location for the burh defences. The burh may have taken in the area of the church and churchyard, market place and adjacent properties. However no clear line for the defences can be easily picked out there being no visible sign surviving earthwork features.

Area taken from Batt 1975:23, fig.A

3.4.c Settlement (Urban)
(a) Commercial core
(i) Market place(s)

AXB/303   Market Place (SMR 10066)
Domesday refers to a settlement of 32 burgages and although a market is not specifically mentioned a market place is likely to have been in place by this date, certainly the Axbridge Chronicle describes a borough market in 'earlier times' (Rahtz 1979:10). The area outlined here is still known as The Square and lies along the east-west routeway immediately north of Batt's proposed defended burh area.

Taken from 1995 digital OS.

(ii) Burgage plots

AXB/304   Burgage Plots
The 32 burgages referred to in the Domesday entry are likely to have been centrally situated perhaps around the market place and along High Street and St. Mary's Street. Long narrow plots can still be discerned in the modern town plan, particularly on the north side of The Square. The area shown here is also the part of the town defined as the Liberties of Axbridge by the 1599 perambulation (after Roberts 1992:7). Two groups of plots can be distinguished which may represent different phases of expansion. The plots facing onto the square have fairly wide plots rising up the hill to the back lane. A second phase of plots facing onto High Street has impinged on the backland of the most westerly of The Square plots, shown by the kink in the back lane. These plots are shorter and narrower than those facing onto The Square.

Excavation behind 26 High Street produced one early pit associated with pottery dated 1150-1200 (Everton 1978:7). This feature also contained building debris, suggesting this had been the site of a Late Saxon or early medieval structure.

After 1839 Tithe Map.

not mapped   Axbridge Mint (SMR 10063)
The burh defences are likely to have contained the Axbridge mint which is known to have operated between 997-1003 and 1017-42 from the 22 known coins found to date (Aston 1984:168, Bromwich 1971:39).

3.4.d Industrial sites
(a) Mills

not mapped   Domesday Mills and Fisheries:
Two mills and three fisheries area mentioned in the Domesday book under Cheddar (which included Axbridge) although their locations are not known. It is possible that the two mills known from the medieval and post-medieval period occupied the same sites (see below). The junction of Cross Moor Drove and Bailiff's Drove was until recent times known as 'fishing place' (V. Russett *pers comm*)

which may mark the site of one of the early fisheries .

4. Medieval
(Map C)

4.1 Archaeological work in the town/ Archaeological knowledge
Of the eleven small scale excavations which have been carried out within the town centre nearly all have produced medieval pottery and several have produced medieval features, for example plot boundaries, pits and buildings.

4.2 Context
Both in Britain and on the continent, the Medieval period saw the growth of town foundation and, to an extent, urban living (though the bulk of the population continued to live in villages). The reasons for this growth were many and complex. In England they included both general factors - such as the growth of mercantile trade (especially the cloth trade) - and more specific ones - such as the post-Conquest establishment of a network of (theoretically) loyal magnates and prelates with large estates and commercial priveleges. The latter led to the increasing relaxation of the royal stranglehold on the profits of towns and chartered boroughs (where tenants paid cash rents and were free of feudal ties), which in turn enabled the establishment of new purpose-built commercial areas (the majority of places classed as towns in the Medieval period have at least some planned elements). Of course, some boroughs were already in existence by the Conquest, and the existing pattern of Saxon urban or semi-urban centres was an important influence on the Medieval one. This is evident in Somerset which, like many parts of the south and west (where the majority of the Saxon *burhs* and boroughs had been established), was peppered with small boroughs in the Medieval period.

In archaeological terms, the Medieval towns are characterised by evidence of partially planned, intensive occupation of restricted areas. Typical features which may occur include: regular, or semi-regular, street layouts; large market places (usually obscured by later encroachments); blocks of regular, long, narrow, plots end on to the commercial frontage; churchyards, either within the Medieval layout or outside it - the latter often indicative of a deliberate shift of activity; regular or irregular suburbs or marginal areas occupied by quays, or industrial sites such as mills; and high status sites such as castles, manor sites and large religious precincts.

Axbridge is one of the fifteen places out of the 45 historic towns covered by this project which either were boroughs or at least had some urban functions before the Conquest. It was one of five out of the six pre-Domesday boroughs which retained their status in the Medieval period. Axbridge was one of nine of the towns at which signs of planning may date to the pre-Conquest period.

4.3 Standing structures and visible remains
There are eleven listed buildings with medieval origins although fragments of many more may be preserved in the fabric of later buildings.

4.4 Archaeological components, shown on Map C
4.4.a Communications
(a) Bridges
AXB/401   Borough Bridge (SMR 10075)
               This is recorded in the SMR as the position of a bridge of medieval origin.

               Taken from SMR map.

(b) Causeways
AXB/406   Droves/Walls
               Three raised causeways leave the town to the south, Axbridge Moor Drove, Bailiff's Wall and Cross Moor Drove. As their names suggest these would have acted as cattle droves giving access to the moorland for summer pasture. Bailiff's Wall may have linked the town to wharves on the river Axe at Cradle Bridge to the south-west of the town.

               Taken from 1811 OS Surveyor's Drawings

4.4.b Water
AXB/408   Church Well
                 On the east side of the market place, below the church, is a public well.

4.4.c Burial sites, religious houses and places of worship
AXB/402   St. John the Baptist Church (SMR 10068)
                 The church is a large and fine cruciform building with a central tower of perpendicular style. A detailed study of the church fabric has been made by RJ Weare (1964), in which he has established five main phases of building, the earliest dating to the mid-13th century. Rebuilding in the 14th may reflect the towns prosperity from cloth trading. The later phases of building date to the early 16th century. Weare suggests that an earlier church may have stood on the site but as yet there is no evidence of such.

                 Taken from 1995 digital OS.

4.4.d Settlement (Urban)
(a) Commercial core: Burgage plots
AXB/404   Tenement Expansion
                 Regular tenement plots can be seen on the 1839 Tithe Map along both sides of West Street. (Those on the north side have been slighted by the construction of the railway in 1869 and those to the south by modern housing development.) Although these plots have the appearance of medieval tenements, supported by excavations in the backlands of 23 and 39/41 West Street (Everton 1975, 1981), they were not considered part of the town until the 17th century. They were excluded from the area outlined in the document of 1599 defining the Liberties of Axbridge and were owned by the manor of Compton Bishop until a charter of James I brought the area under the control of the Borough Corporation.

                 Taken from the 1839 Tithe Map.

(b) Other Town Plots
AXB/403   Almshouses
                 The almshouse is a grade II* listed building, dating from at least the 16th and probably the 15th century (LB 13028).
4.4.e Industrial sites
(a) Mills
AXB/405   Mills and Tannery
                 Four springs rise on the northern side of Axbridge which would have provided water for the two mills known in the town. The first stood west of the church in the backland of a house now known as The Rising. It has also been suggested that this area may have been used for tanning (V. Russett *pers comm*.) Mill buildings also stood on the corner of Old Church Road and Cross Moor Road. A modern house on this road has the name 'Millstream' as a reminder of the site's previous use. Whether these mill sites are also those associated with Axbridge at Domesday is still to be established.

5. POST-Medieval
(Map D)

5.1 Archaeological work in the town/ Archaeological knowledge
Nearly all the excavations in the town centre have produced evidence of post-medieval ceramics and many have shown the post-medieval boundaries or buildings.

5.2 Context
The basic pattern of towns had been established by the end of the middle ages, and there were very few major changes

in the Post-Medieval period, though the economic fortunes of particular towns rose and fell. Nearly all the Somerset towns depended on either cloth manufacture or cloth trade to some extent. Axbridge was no exception, and was one of many of the 45 historic towns covered by this project which held its own economically for much of this period.

5.3 Standing structures and visible remains
There are 23 listed buildings registered as of this period in Axbridge centre. Much of the town centre was rebuilt or re-facaded in the 17th century.

5.4 Archaeological components, *shown on* Map D
5.4.a Communications
(a) Roads, streets and routeways
AXB/501   <u>Roads shown on 1811 OS Surveyor's Drawings</u>

5.4.b Settlement (Urban)
(a) Other town plots
AXB/502   <u>General Expansion</u>
                 Expansion of the town from the surmised areas of burgage tenure is mapped here, based on buildings
                 portrayed on the 1811 OS Surveyor's Drawings.

                 Taken from the 1811 OS Surveyor's Drawings

5.4.c Other
AXB/503   <u>Wink's Well (Water Channels and Pools) (SMR 10074)</u>
                 Wink's well is first referred to in a document of 1620 although the origins of this unique feature may
                 be considerably more ancient. It consists of a series of natural hollows in the limestone rock, which
                 have been artificially enlarged and reshaped, joined by narrow channels chiselled into the rock. It
                 is not clear what purpose these features served, other than as providing water, as the hollows are
                 continuously fed by ground water percolation.(Everton and Russett 1987)

                 Taken from SMR.

6. INDUSTRIAL (LATE 18TH AND 19TH CENTURY)
(Map E)

6.1 Archaeological work in the town/ Archaeological knowledge
None.

6.2 Context
The late 18th and 19th centuries saw some changes to the urban pattern, with the beginning of the emergence of larger centres (often at the expense of smaller ones), linked by vastly improved communication lines (turnpikes, railways and canals). Somerset was not characterised by the kind of large scale industrialisation and urbanisation seen in other counties - indeed, the virtual collapse of its most important industry, which was cloth, affected nearly all of the Medieval and Post-Medieval towns - but some did take place. The changes were reflected in a series of alterations to town governance, which left the county with a total of only fifteen Municipal Boroughs and Urban Districts by the end of the 19th century.

Axbridge is one of the 22 or so places which though they did not merit Borough or Urban District status at the end of the 19th century, remained market centres and can probably still be regarded as towns (though several of them had sunk towards village status during the course of the century). It was one of five of these which was the centre of its own Rural District, and one of three which remained a chartered borough well into the 19th century.

6.3 Standing structures and visible remains
There are 52 listed buildings of this period in the centre of Axbridge, although some of these are likely to have earlier origins or elements retained in their current structure.

6.4 Archaeological components, *shown on* **Map E**

6.4.a Communications

(a) Railways

AXB/601   Cheddar Valley and Yatton Branch of the GWR
                 The railway was opened in 1869 and closed in 1963. Part of its line has been reused as the route of
                 the Axbridge by-pass and the station building has been converted to use as a youth club.

                 Taken from 1904 OS.

6.4.b Burial sites, religious houses and places of worship

Not mapped   Quaker Cemetery
                 A Quaker cemetery was apparently situated behind St. Mary's Street (V. Russett *pers comm*). The
                 precise location has not been verified.

AXB/602   St. Michael's Sanatorium and Cemetery
                 The Sanatorium and cemetery are shown on the 1886 OS.

                 Taken from the 1886 OS.

AXB/603   Methodist Chapel
                 A Methodist chapel is shown on the south side of West Street on the 1886 OS.

                 Taken from the 1886 OS.

Not mapped   Baptist Chapel:
                 Application was made to use a redundant malthouse on the corner of Moor Lane, owned by James
                 Chandler in 1824 (Castle 1989). This is not shown on the 1886 OS, by which time it may have gone
                 out of use.

6.4.c Settlement (Suburban)

AXB/605   General Expansion
                 Some small scale expansion during the 19th century shown on the 1904 OS map is mapped here.

                 Taken from the 1904 OS

AXB/606   Axbridge Union Work House
                 The work house at Axbridge was built in the first half of the 19th century. It is shown on the 1839
                 Tithe map as 'Axbridge Prison house', perhaps a mark of the severity of these institutions. Both the
                 1886 and the 1904 maps show a building with an additional west wing marked as 'Axbridge Union
                 Workhouse'. The 1981 OS shows the building and another to the north-east marked as a hospital.
                 The buildings are now converted to residential use.

                 Taken from 1886 OS.

6.4.d Industrial sites

AXB/607   Extraction Industries (SMR 10069, 10071, 10072, 10077)
                 The rising land to the north of the town is scattered with the remains of mining and quarrying. There
                 are two 19th or 20th century ochre quarries in the immediate vicinity of the town, both with tramways
                 leading to the mines. Ochre mining was 'considerable industry' in Somerset in the early twentieth
                 century (VCH II:354), however its origins may be much earlier. The 10th century charter of Bishop
                 Compton refers to sand scatters which have been interpreted as marking sites of ochre mines (V.
                 Russett *pers comm*).
                  A further mine, possibly another ochre mine or the remains of lime quarrying, is recorded higher on
                 Fry's Hill. A lime kiln is shown on the 1886 OS map near to a small quarry, and a number of other

small lime or gravel quarries are shown on the 1904 OS beside the railway line.
These represent the remains of small scale extraction industries, whilst lime and gravel extraction is common in the area only two other ochre mines are recorded in the county SMR.

Taken from SMR Maps

AXB/608   <u>Gasworks</u>
Gas works were built on the east side of Moorland Lane, prior to 1886.

Taken from 1886 OS.

6.4.e Other
AXB/609   <u>Fives Court</u>
A fives court dated 1757 is portrayed in a painting by Alfred Bennett beside 'Mrs Gallops Cottage' on Axbridge Hill. Anne Everton located the foundations of the cottage in 1981, lying beside Mendip House. There are six other courts recorded in the Somerset SMR although others may be known.

After A. Everton's description (1979,1981) and the 1839 Tithe Map.

7. 20TH CENTURY
(Map F)

7.1 Context
The 20th century has seen a vast physical expansion of some existing towns, and some expansion in most of the 45 historic towns covered by the project. However, there have only been limited alterations to the overall pattern of urban settlement. The County Structure Plan still contains fifteen settlements defined as Towns: this is almost identical to the late 19th century list of Municipal Boroughs and Urban Districts. Axbridge is one of 30 of the 45 historic towns covered by this project which is not classed as a town in the County Structure Plan.

7.2 Settlement components, *shown on* **Map F**

7.2.a Communications
(a) Roads, streets and routeways
AXB/701   <u>Bypass</u>
The bypass was constructed, partially reusing the redundant railway line, to the north of the town after 1981.

Taken from 1995 digital OS.

7.2.b Burial sites, religious houses and places of worship
AXB/704   <u>Cemetery Extension</u>
Taken from 1995 digital OS.

7.2.c Settlement (Urban)
(a) Suburbs
AXB/702   <u>Housing Developments</u>
Taken from 1995 digital OS.

7.2.d Settlement (Rural)
(a) Farms
AXB/703   <u>Semi-Rural Expansion</u>
Taken from 1995 digital OS.

V. THE POTENTIAL OF AXBRIDGE

1. Research interests

Axbridge has very high research interest and potential, not only as a documented Saxon burh and early medieval cloth trading town but also as part of a group of royal foundations centred on Cheddar. Whilst there are still many questions to be answered about the settlement itself (the actual position of the burh, the form of the defences, dating the foundation of the settlement and the various phases of expansion) the answers to these (particularly good dating material) will be of relevance to the wider picture of Saxon settlement in the Axe Valley. In the medieval period it forms part of a wider group of trading towns strung along the valley in competition with one another. The maintenance of the fine series of documents relating to the town through this period also increases its research potential, as does the likelihood of well preserved buried remains due to the towns failure to prosper and expand after the 17th century.

2. Areas of potentially exceptional preservation

Anne Everton highlighted the likelihood of good preservation on the southern side of West Street, High Street, St Mary's Street etc. as there has been the tendency to build up the land on this side to produce a flatter platform. Areas on the southern edge of the town may have waterlogged remains surviving.

3. Limitations

The archaeological potential of Axbridge is limited only by subsequent phases of rebuilding.

4. Extent of current protection

There are no scheduled monuments in the town centre. There are 86 listed buildings, including 2 grade I, 6 grade II* and 78 grade II buildings. There are both a Conservation Area and an AHAP.

5. Management Proposals

See the Archaeological Guidance Document.

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1975	23 West St.	4281 5458	12779	A Everton (1975)
1978	St. Mary St.	4325 5455	12780	A&J Garlick (1978:3)
1978	Mendip& Moorland Cottages	4311 5453	12781	A Everton (1978:3)
1981	39/41 West St.	4276 5456	12777	A Everton (1981:2-3)
1982	31 High St.	4295 5459	12782	A Everton 1982:4)
1989	Elm House, Garage Site	4308 5444	12778	V Russett (1989)
1992	Primary School	4310 5440	12755	R Broomhead (1992)

VII. COMPONENT INDEXES

1. Component to map

Component	Map		Component	Map
AXB/101	A		AXB/401	C
AXB/201	A		AXB/402	C
AXB/202	A		AXB/403	C
AXB/203	A		AXB/404	C
AXB/204	A		AXB/405	C
			AXB/406	C
AXB/301	B		AXB/408	C
AXB/302	B			
AXB/303	B		AXB/501	D
AXB/304	B		AXB/502	D
			AXB/503	D

2. Component to Page

Maps

Map A – Prehistoric and Roman

Map B – Saxon

Key: Components shown on earlier maps are shown in yellow.

Map C – Medieval

Key: Components shown on earlier maps are shown in yellow.

Map D – Post medieval

Key: Components shown on earlier maps are shown in yellow.

Map E – Industrial

Key: Components shown on earlier maps are shown in yellow.

Map F – 20th century

Key: Components shown on earlier maps are shown in yellow.

Map G – Existing constraints

Key: Scheduled Monuments (dark blue),
       Listed Buildings   Grade I (light blue)
                                 Grade II* (light green)
                                 Grade II (dark green)
       Conservation Area (light green)
       Area of High Archaeological Potential (pink)

AXB/101

Quarry
(disused)

Track

Track

Track

Track?

Track

Fry's Hill

Cemetery

Reservoir
(covered)

Shute Shelve Hill

Quarry
(disused)

Path

Track

AXBRIDGE CP

St Michael's
Cheshire Home

Axbridge Hill

Quarry
(disused)

Track

Track

Track

Track

Track

Track

Path

CHEDDAR RO

Hillside

21m

A371

FENNEL LANE

Townsend
Farm

BACK LANE

STATION RD

MENDIP CLOSE

WOODLANDS

A371

PW

CHESTNUT

HIPPISLEY DRIVE

Compton
House

WEST STREET

HIGH STREET

PW

STARRS CLOSE

ST MARY'S STREET

CHEDDAR ROAD

Townsend
Farm

HOULGATE WAY

PO

JUBILEE ROAD

AXB/204 SETTLEMENT?

Pol Ho

Furlong
Path

PENN WAY

ORCHARD ROAD

PARKFIELD

Ellenge Strea

AXB/114

OLD CHURCH ROAD

Sch

Path

Path

AXB/202

AXB/201

WALNUT CL

MOOR GREEN

MOORLAND STREET

KNIGHTSTONE

AXB/202

Drain

Path

Axbridge

PROWSE'S LANE

Drain

CROSS MOOR DRIVE

Drain

Pipe Line

Ppg Sta

PORTMEADE D

Drain

Moorland
Farm

Walnut
Farm

Crossmoor

BAILIFFS' WALL

Drain

Drain

Drain

Drain

Drain

Sewage
Works

6m

Drain

Track

Ellenge Stream

Drain

Drain

OVE

Drain

Drain

Drain

SOMERSET
County Council

AXB/302 West Street, High Street

AXBRIDGE CP

AXB/501 Back Lane

AXB/303 Market Square

AXB/501 High St.

AXB/302 Early Burgage Plots?

Shute Shelve Hill

Quarry
(disused)

Fry's Hill

Cemetery

Reservoir
(covered)

Track

Axbridge Hill

Quarry
(disused)

St Michael's
Cheshire Home

Hillside

FENNEL LANE

Track

21m

A371

Townsend
Farm

PW

STATION RD

MENDIP CLOSE

WOODLANDS

CHEDDAR RO

CHESTNUT

Compton
House

STARRS CLOSE

PW

HIPPISLEY DRIVE

CHEDDAR ROAD

Track

AXB/401 Twitchen Lane

AXB/302 Cheddar Road,St.Mary's Street

Townsend
Farm

HOULGATE WAY

Po.Ho.

ORCHARD ROAD

PARKFIELD

Sch.

Furlong
Path

PENN WAY

KINGSTON

OLD CHURCH ROAD

WALNUT CL.

MOOR GREEN

Path

AXB/301 Burh?

AXB/305 Early through road?

AXB/305 Portmeade Drove

Axbridge

Ppg Sta

PROWSE'S LANE

Drain

Moorland
Farm

Walnut
Farm

Drain

PORTMEADE D

CROSS MOOR DR

BAILIFFS WALL

Pipe Line

Crossmoor

Drain

Sewage
Works

6m

Drain

Drain

Ellenge Strea

Drain

Track

Ellenge Stream

Drain

Drain

Drain

GROVE

SOMERSET
County Council

Quarry (disused)

Track

Track

Track

Track

Track

AXBRIDGE CP

Fry's Hill

Track

Cemetery

Reservoir (covered)

Shute Shelve Hill

Quarry (disused)

Axbridge Hill

St Michael's Cheshire Home

Quarry (disused)

AXB/407 Mill/tannery

AXB/402 Church

FENNEL LANE

Hillside

21m

AXB/404 Burgage expansion

Townsend Farm

BACK

PW

STATION AVENUE

MENDIP CLOSE

WOODLANDS

W E

CHEDDAR RO

Compton House

STARRS CLOSE

PW

CHESTNUT

HIPPISLEY DRIVE

CHEDDAR ROAD

Townsend Farm

AXB/404 burgage expansion

HOULGATE WAY

OLD CHURCH ROAD

Pol Ho Sch

MOORLAND STREET

Furlong Path

PENN WAY

ORCHARD ROAD

PARKFIELD

AXB/408 well

WALNUT C

PO

Pa

AXB/403 Almshouses

Axbridge

Drain

Drain

AXB/407 mill

Drain

MOOR GREEN LANE

Path

Ellenge Strea

Moorland Farm

Walnut Farm

Ppg Sta

PORTMEADE D

AXB/401 Borough Bridge

CROSSMOOR DRIVE

BAILIFFS

Crossmoor

Sewage Works

6m

Drain

Drain

Drain

PROWSE'S LANE

Drain

Drain

Track

Drain

Ellenge Stream

Drain

OVE

Drain

Drain

Somerset EUS

Axbridge Map C - Medieval

Scale   1:7500   Date   15/01/2002

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SOMERSET
County Council

AXB/503 Water channels, basin and well

Quarry (disused)

Track

Track

Fry's Hill

Track

Cemetery

Reservoir (covered)

Shute Shelve Hill

Track

AXBRIDGE CP

St Michael's Cheshire Home

Axbridge Hill

Quarry (disused)

Track

Track

Track

A371

Track

Track

Hillside

KENNEL LANE

21m

AXB/502 Expansion on West Street

Townsend Farm

A371

BACK LANE

STATION RD

MENDIP CLOSE

WOODLANDS

PW

CHEDDAR RO

AXB/302 West Street, High Street

CHESTNUT

HIPPISLEY DRIVE

CHEDDAR ROAD

Compton House

STARRS CLOSE

PW

AXB/303 Market Square

PO

AXB/502 Off Cheddar Road

PENN WAY

FAIRFIELD

AXB/502 Cheddar Road

Townsend Farm

HOULGATE WAY

KINGS TON ROAD

ORCHARD ROAD

AXB/501 Prowe's Lane

AXB/501

Furlong Path

Path

Ellenge Strea

WALNUT CL

AXB/501

Path

Drain

Moorland Farm

AXB/502 Moorland Lane

Axbridge

Ppg Sta

PROWSE'S LANE

GROSS MOOR DRIVE

Drain

Drain

Pipe Line

Path

PORTMEADE D

Crossmoor

Drain

Moorland Farm

Walnut Farm

Drain

Drain

Drain

Sewage Works

16m

Drain

Drain

Somerset EUS

Ellenge Stream

Drain

Axbridge Map D - Post-medieval

Scale   1:7500   Date   15/01/2002

SOMERSET County Council

AXB/607 Gravel Pit

AXB/607 Quarry Hill

AXB/607 Ochre mine

AXB/607 Ochre mine

AXB/602 St. Michael's Cemetery

Cemetery

Reservoir
(covered)

AXB/607 Limekiln

AXB/605 Mendip house, Horne's Lane

Axbridge Hill

AXB/602 St. Michael's Sanitorium

St Michael's
Cheshire Home

AXB/607 Gravel Pit

Quarry
(disused)

Quarry
(disused)

AXBRIDGE CP

Track

Fry's Hill

Track

Track

Track

AXB/601 Horner's Lane

FENNEL LANE

Hill

Axe

Track

AXB/601 Railway

MENDIP CLOSE

WOODLANDS

CHEDDAR RO

21m

Townsend
Farm

WEST STREET

PW

PW

CHESTNU

AXB/610 Station Road

CHEDDAR ROAD

Compton
House

STARRS CLOSE

ST. MARY'S STREET

JUBILEE ROAD

PARKFIELD

Townsend
Farm

HOULGATE WAY

Pol Ho

Sch

PO

Furlong
Path

AXB/605 S S of Cheddar Road

AXB/603 Methodist Chapel

OLD CHURCH ROAD

Path

AXB/606 Union Workhouse

WALNUT CL

MOOR GREEN

Axbridge

Ellenge Strea

PROWSE'S LANE

Drain

Drain

Drain

Drain

Path

AXB/608 Gasworks

Ppg Sta

CROSS MOOR DRIVE

BAILIFFS' WALL

Moorland
Farm

Walnut
Farm

Drain

PORTMEADE D

Townsend
Farm

Crossmoor

Sewage
Works

16m

Drain

Drain

Drain

Track

Drain

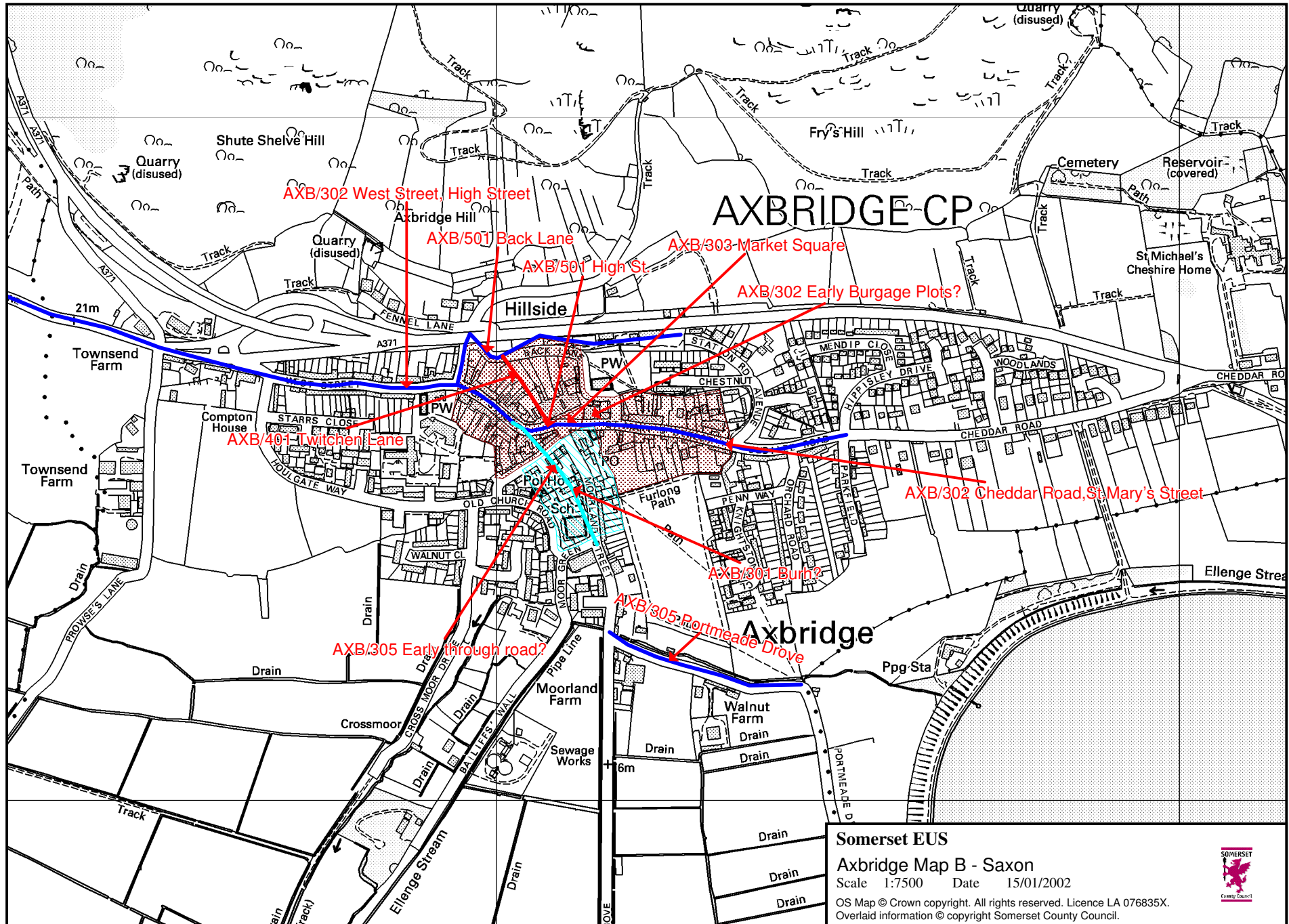Ellenge Stream

Drain

Drain

Drain

A371

A371

Path

Somerset EUS

Axbridge Map E - Industrial
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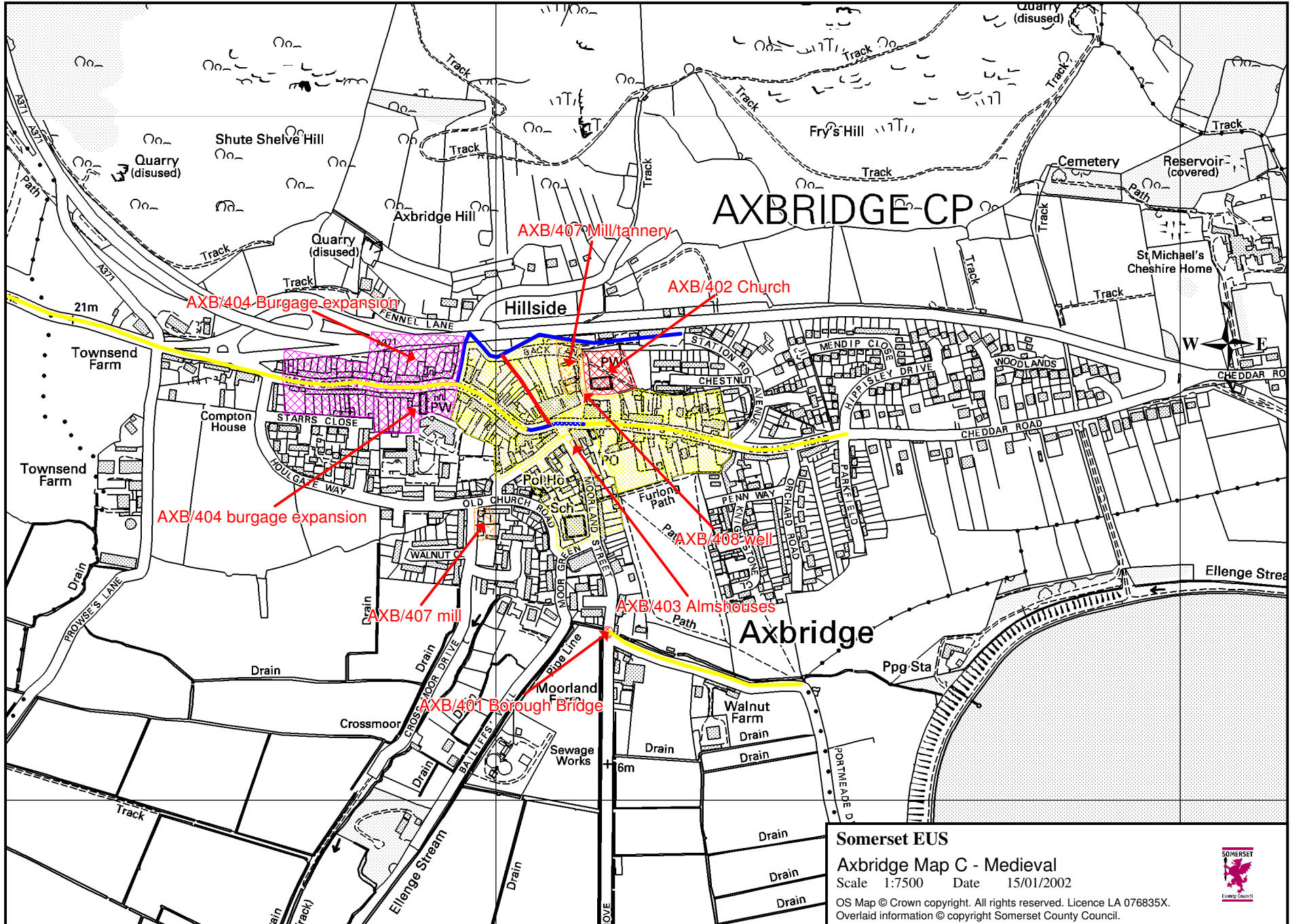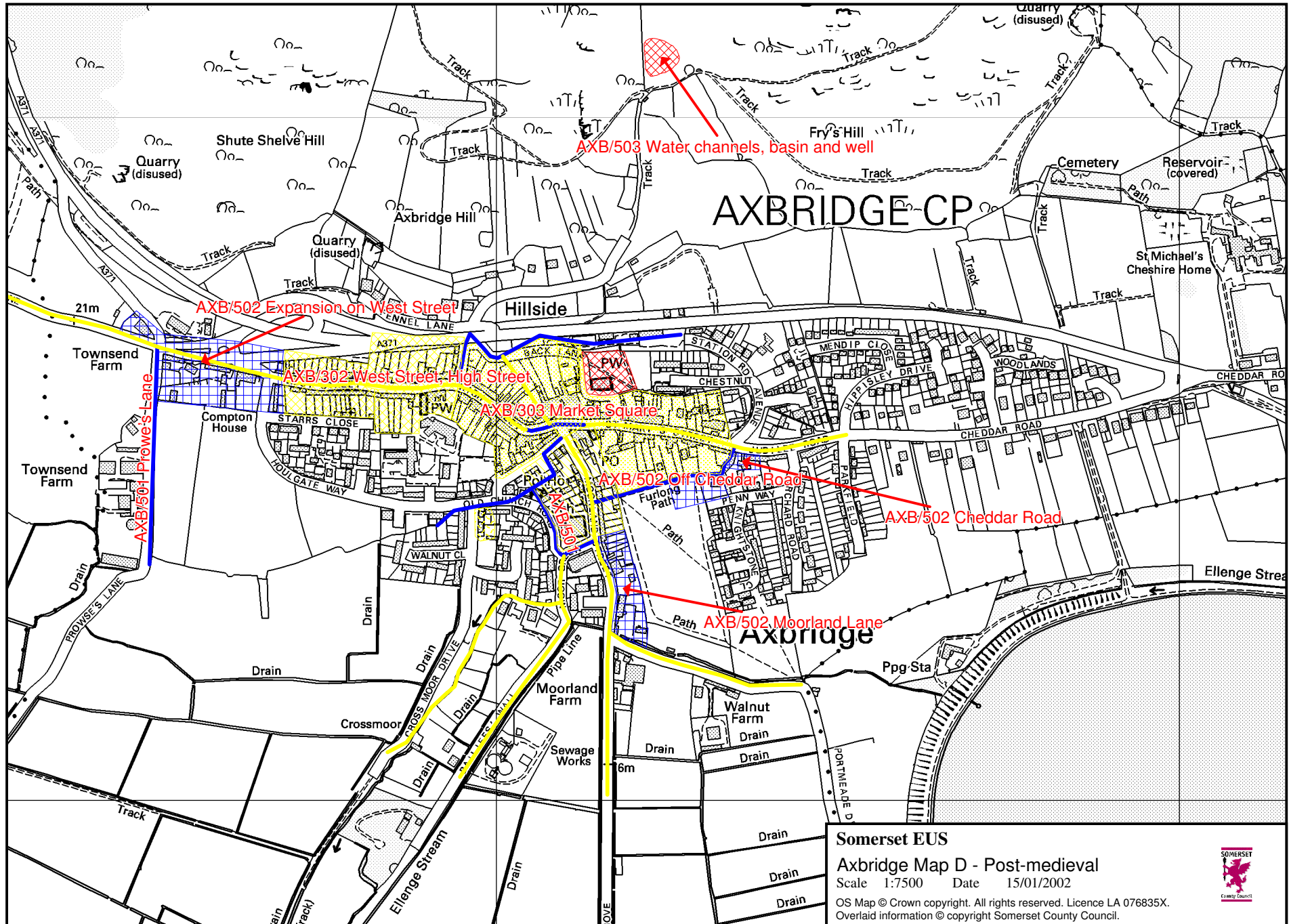Overlaid information © copyright Somerset County Council.

SOMERSET
County Council

AXB/703 Horne's Lane
AXB/703 Horne's Lane
AXB/703 Horne's Lane
AXB/701 By-pass junction
AXB/703 Station House
AXB/704 Cemetery extension
AXB/701 by-pass
AXB/702 C20th dev.
AXB/703 Townsend Farm
AXB/702 C20th dev.
AXB/703 Pipe Lane
AXB/703 Port Meade Drove
AXB/704 Sewage Works

Shute Shelve Hill
Quarry (disused)
Axbridge Hill
Quarry (disused)
AXBRIDGE CP
Fry's Hill
Cemetery
Reservo (covered)
St Michael's Cheshire Home
Hillside
21m
Townsend Farm
West Street
Compton House
Starrs Close
PW
Houlgate Way
Townsend Farm
St Mary's Street
Pol Ho
Sch
PO
Furlong Path
Penn Way
Jubilee Road
Path
Axbridge
Ellenge Stream
Moorland Farm
Crossmoor
Walnut Farm
Ppg Sta
Sewage Works
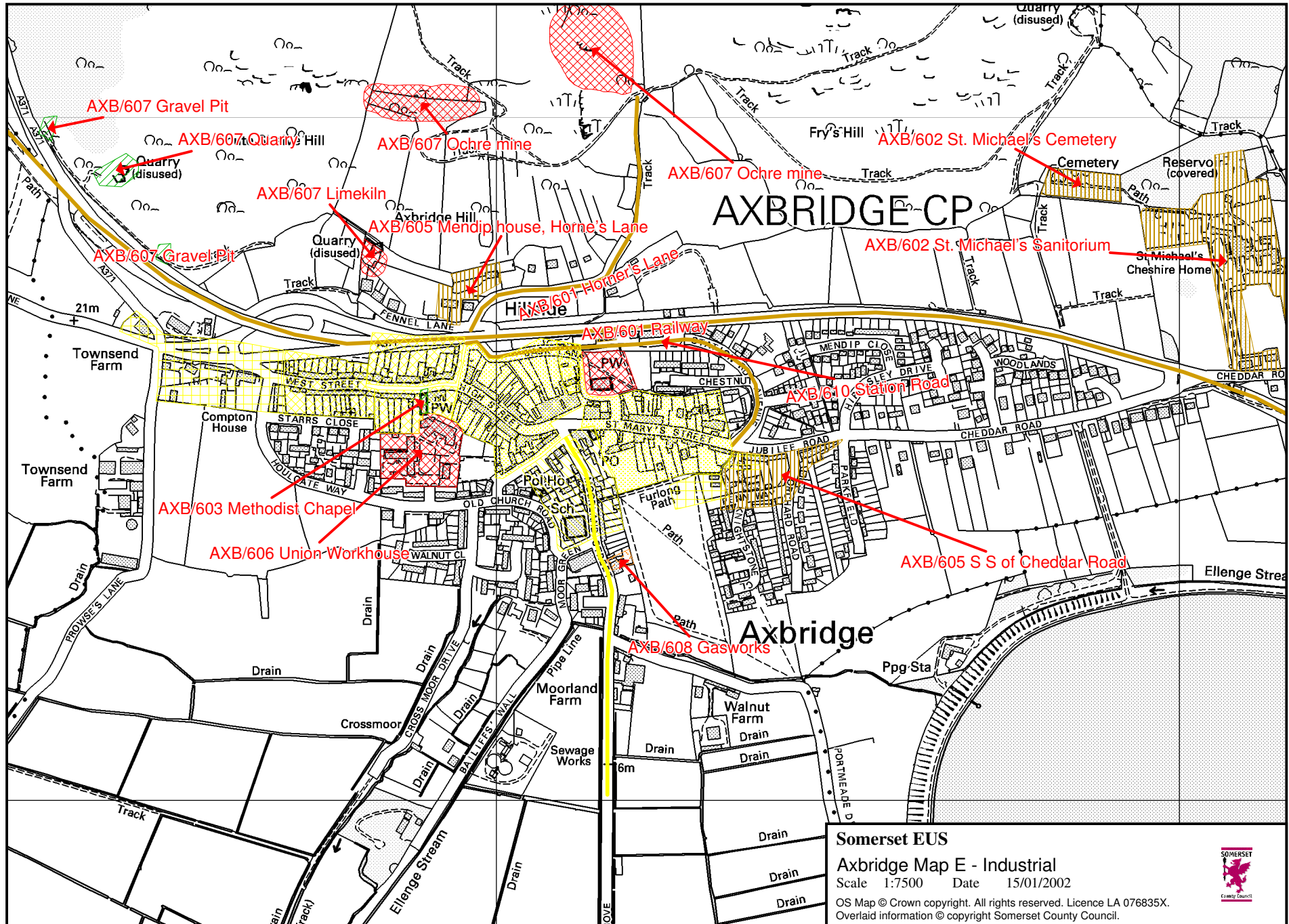Drain
Track
Ellenge Stream

Somerset EUS
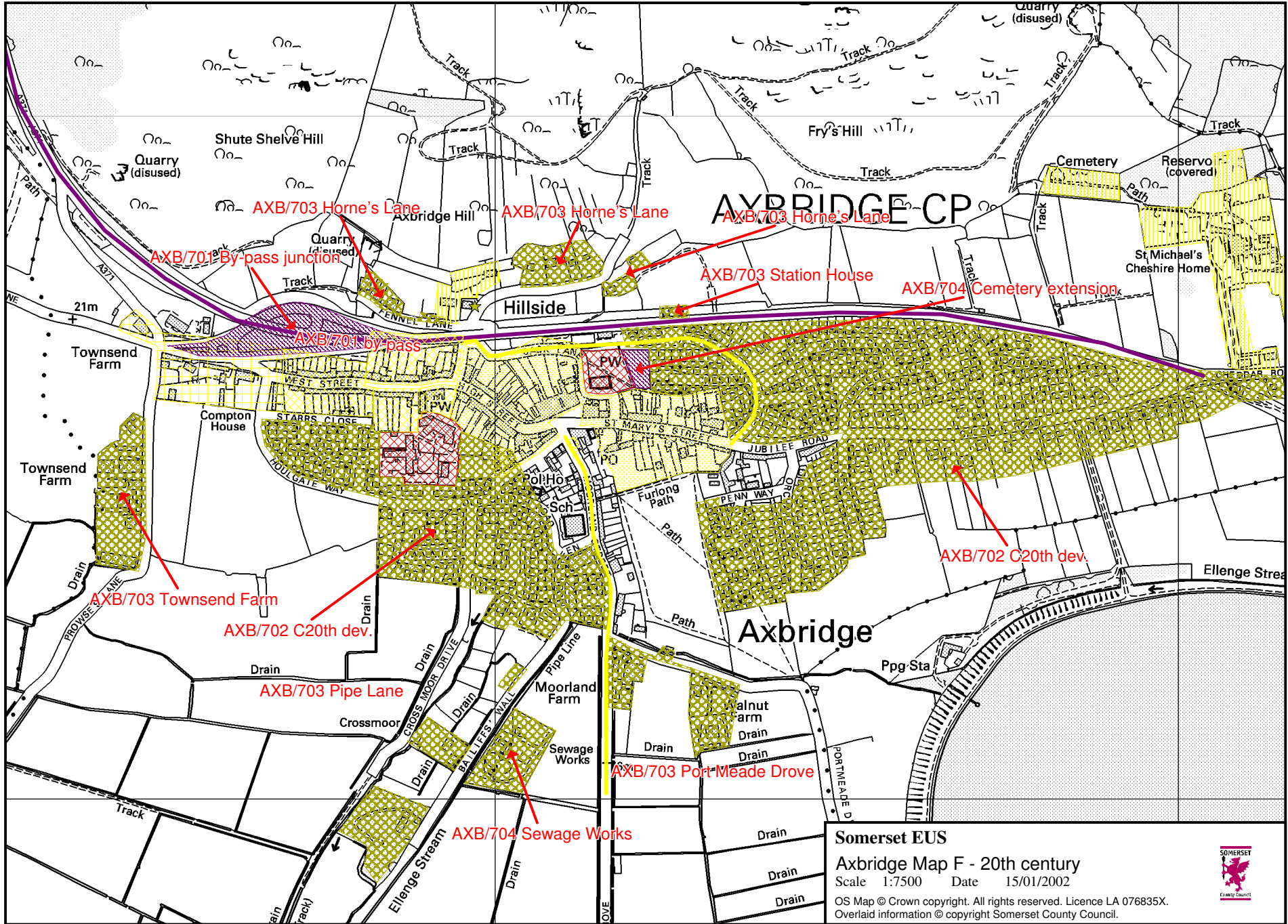
Axbridge Map F - 20th century
Scale   1:7500   Date   15/01/2002

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AXBRIDGE CP

Shute Shelve Hill

Quarry
(disused)

Fry's Hill

Quarry
(disused)

Axbridge Hill

Cemetery

Reservoir
(covered)

St Michael's
Cheshire Home

Hillside

Townsend
Farm

Compton
House

Townsend
Farm

Moorland
Farm

Crossmoor

Walnut
Farm

Sewage
Works

Axbridge

Ppg Sta

Ellenge Strea

Ellenge Stream