

**YCCCART 2022/Y10**

**Who made the Kenn River? (Part 2: Nailsea Wall to Sutte Pill)**

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

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Water is life, but too much of a good thing is not: the Blind Yeo drainage channel of c1950

*Multiple parishes, Documentary and photographic study, Kenn River (lower course), 2022, Y10, v.1*

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*'See you the little mill that clacks  
So busy by the brook?  
She's ground her corn and paid her tax  
Ever since Domesday Book'*

Rudyard Kipling - *Puck's song, Puck of Pooks Hill*

*'Houses live and die: there is a time for building  
And a time for living and for generation  
And a time for the wind to break the loosened pane  
And shake the wainscot where the field-mouse trots'*

T S Eliot - *East Coker*

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Volumes 1 *'Who made the Land Yeo?'* (1998) and 2 *'Boggy Meares and Queachy Fennes'* (2000), both by the late Keith S Gardner, were published by the NDLHS, and are still available at <http://www.ndlhs.org.uk>. Volume 3 (*'Who made the Kenn River? (Part 1: Backwell Common to Nailsea Wall'*) is available at [ycccart.co.uk](http://ycccart.co.uk)

## **Abstract**

*The lower part of the Kenn River (the lengths above Nailsea Wall were discussed in YCCCART 2022/Y3: 'Who made the Kenn River? Part 1') is even more clearly artificial than its upper areas. While some vague dates can be assigned to some features along the river (such as Nailsea Wall), the majority of the area possesses little or no early documentation, which complicates the study.*

*It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the bishopric (of Bath and Wells) was involved in the processes that led to the current Kenn River, but further detailed documentary work will be needed to prove this, assuming that such evidence still exists.*

## **Acknowledgements**

This survey could not have been carried out without the ability to use the network of Public Rights of Way, maintained by North Somerset Council, and access to the government lidar data used here. My debt to the pioneering works of Keith Gardner and Stephen Rippon will be obvious.

## **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.

In preparing this publication, the decision to take the perhaps unusual step of detailing some remaining problems with the data, is contained in the Appendices under 'Problems'. This is to attempt to address the academically untidy issue of data that do not initially appear to correlate with the premise as presented.

In the accompanying text, Ordnance Survey National Grid References vary: precisely located features can have 8-figure NGRs, while less well located or much larger features may have 6- or 4-figure references.

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*For further details, see [ycccart.co.uk](http://ycccart.co.uk)*



## Site location



*Fig 1: Nailsea Wall to the M5 motorway*



*Fig 2: M5 motorway to Sutte Pill*

While the two ends of the lower part of the Kenn River (Nailsea Wall and Sutte Pill / Hooks Ear) are easy enough to identify, the course of the river between these points appears to have been drastically altered at least once, and that early, since the timing seems to have been between the formation of parish boundaries (perhaps 11th/12th century) and an ill-defined period later, when fields to the north of Kenn village were laid out (see body of text).

Today, all reaches and potential reaches of the lower Kenn River are in the parishes of Kenn and Clevedon, in the unitary authority of North Somerset. The descriptions below are of the modern river unless otherwise stated.

The Kenn River (Fig 1) enters the area of this study at the eastern end of Nailsea Wall (ST4397369309): it follows the south side of that medieval flood bank as far as ST4267869705, where the mid-20th century diversion of its waters into the Blind Yeo lies, some 40m NE of Kenn Pier Sluice. Until the late 20th century, the north bank of the Kenn River here formed the parish boundary of Kenn and Clevedon.

Leaving aside the modern diversion into the Blind Yeo, the Kenn then runs under Kenn Pier Sluice, past Kenn Pier farm, and subsequently in a linear and completely non-sinuuous bed to the north of Kenn Village, until it reaches the area of engineering works for the construction of the M5 and its accompanying B3133 Kenn Road bridge (c1970; approx ST41136927). It is surely significant that this section of the river does *not* form the parish boundary, which instead pursues a sinuous course to the north.

On the west side of the M5 (Fig 2), the modern river follows a sinuous, generally south-western course, to meet the parish of Kingston Seymour at Bulbeck (ST4034468786) and a substantial tributary from the south, which forms the Kenn/Kingston Seymour boundary up to the present (2022).

The Kenn then runs north-west as far as a sharp left-hand turn to the south-west, at the site of a Clevedon boundary stone (ST4013268925).

It continues in a south-westerly direction, past the site of some abandoned farms (see text below) as far as Riverside Farm in Kingston (ST3967868414), where it loops around to run north-west as far as New Cut Bow, where the diversion of the river is recorded at least as early as mid-17th century (ST3930468601).

It then passes through the coastal defences, and becomes the sinuous channel of Sutte Pill that conveys it to the sea at ST3833668507, west of Treble House Farm, to end in a further sinuous track through the intertidal zone to the Severn, although a modern section runs south of the sea defences past Treble House.

The Kingston / Clevedon parish boundary, which has followed the river from the Clevedon boundary stone (above), now follows the river to a point 550m from the current coastal defences, and runs between stake scatters relating to former traps of the onshore fishing industry.

## **Land use and geology**

From Nailsea Wall to the sea and the intertidal zone, the present Kenn River runs through the alluvial clays and interbedded peats of the Northmarsh.

Most of the land on either side of the Kenn River was farmed as pasture, or meadow in some restricted areas with exceptionally good drainage: arable cultivation, especially of maize, is a modern and still unusual sight.

Much of the lower course of the Kenn River is fairly inaccessible, although the section alongside Nailsea Wall, and that in the lowest section, have accompanying public footpaths. A further footpath (enlivened by energetic gaggles of geese!) runs from Kenn village to Whitehouse Farm in Clevedon, crossing the Kenn by means of a 19th century stone bridge.



## Historical & archaeological context

### *Nailsea Wall*

The formation of 'walls' (a Somerset term meaning 'two parallel rhynes dug, and the arisings piled between to produce a long earthwork bank, the whole often adopted to separate two areas of (potential) drainage') is an indispensable part of such drainage activity in the Somerset marshlands.

Few of the causeways / walls in the Northmarsh are accurately dated. Gang Wall in Yatton is pre-1382 (Broomhead 2017); Nailsea Wall pre-dates 1432 (SHC DD\X\RY/4/6).



*Fig 3: Nailsea Wall (as the driver sees it); note the road is about 1m higher than the surrounding land.*

Figure 3 shows the Wall with Nailsea Moor to its north: this moor and Kenn Moor to the south, formed completely separate areas of drainage from medieval origins until the mid-20th century.

Constructional details of the walls are unknown: whether they were constructed on beds of wooden foundations, such as thousands of wooden faggots, or simply piled as dug out, is not known: no excavation of such a structure has ever been made in the Northmarsh,



and few, if any, on a national basis.



*Fig 4: Nailsea Wall (and Kenn River to south) from Kenn Pier, looking east*

In the case of Nailsea Wall, the bank seems to have been constructed on the surviving silts of an earlier river bed, the joint course of the proto-Kenn from Nailsea, and the Gardner river, from Kenn Moor (see Fig 5 below). On the lidar scan, the blue line of the Kenn River to the south is evident: the relict silts of the underlying palaeochannels show as features about 0.6 - 1.0m above their surroundings.

The 'Clevedon' end of the Wall took advantage of naturally rising ground, probably supported below by the buried gravels that outcrop around Kenn village.



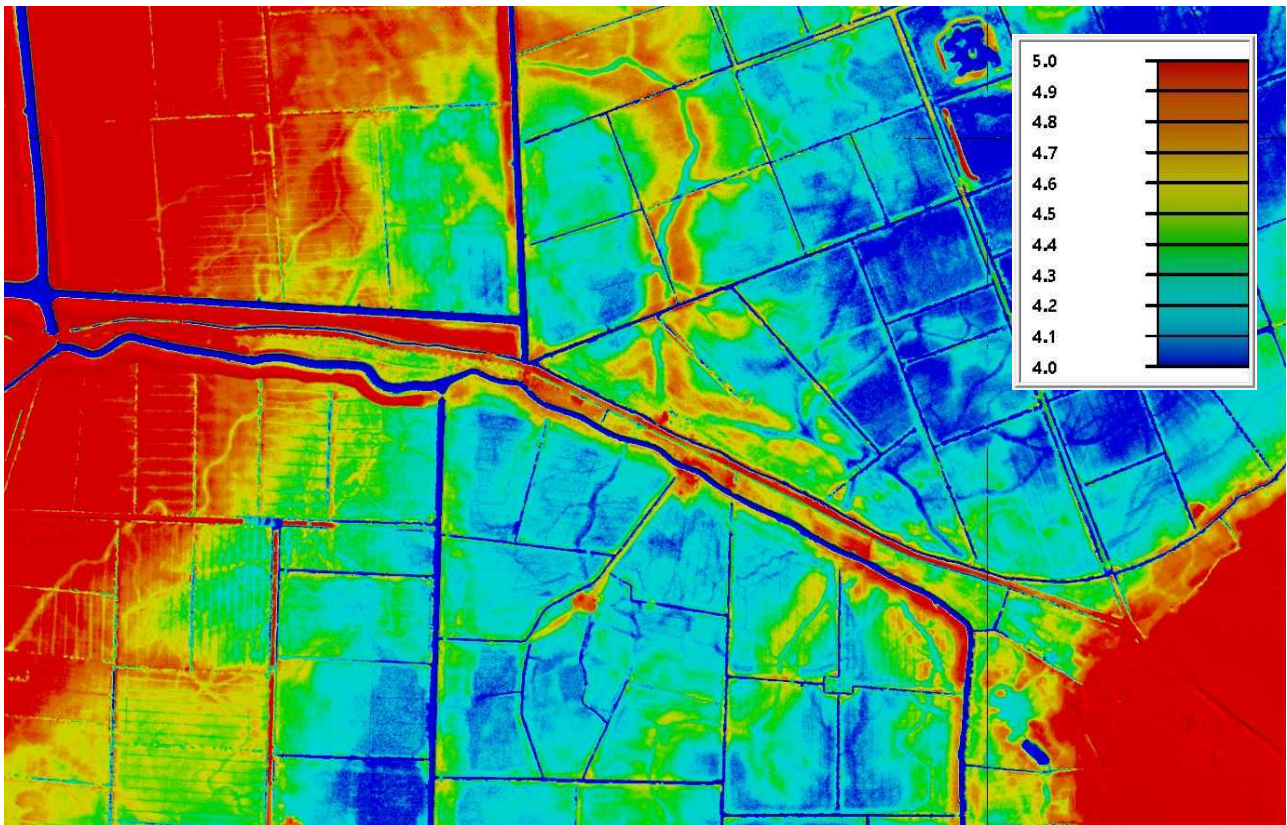


Fig 5: Nailsea Wall lidar scan (heights in metres AOD)

Two notable features of this area next to the wall are possibly significant.

To the north of the Wall, at approximately ST435696, Barrett in his History of Bristol (Barrett 1789) reported *'three urns of Roman coins...dug up at Nailsea Wall, which divides Ken-moor and Nailsea-moor'*. If the findspot is accurate, this places the burial spot in the silts of the underlying river (which may or may not have been active in the Roman period). Either way, it seems that the water course, and probably not Nailsea Wall, was the marker for this deposition.

To the south of the Wall (and labelled on Fig 1), lie the earthwork remains of Kenn Decoy Pool. This duck decoy was constructed by Lord Poulett (of Hinton St George, but also of Kenn, among others) in the early 17th century: there are Quarter Sessions records of physical resistance to the construction on behalf of local peoples in 1635; further details of this site will be published later (YCCCART, forthcoming).

The construction of the Kenn River along the south of the Wall was clearly part of the drainage episode: to level the bed of the river (or deepen more for free drainage to the west) would be necessary for water to flow from Kenn Moor to the north of Kenn village, since the land at this end of the wall is clearly at least 1m higher than in the Moor itself (Fig 5).



The minimal fall between Nailsea Wall and Sutte Pill means that before the intervention of mid-20th century engineering and the creation of the Blind Yeo drainage channel, the moors theoretically drained by the Kenn River (to the south of Nailsea Wall) and the Land, Middle and (old) Blind Yeos to its north, were often under water for months in the winter affecting both access to, and quality of, grazing there.

Eventually, a solution was sought from 1949 in the construction of the massive new waterway, to run from Kenn Pier / Nailsea Wall, to debouche into the sea at Clevedon Pill (Williams 1970).

This left a much-reduced watercourse on the 'natural' course of the Kenn, and mid-20th century engineering works visible at Kenn Pier (Fig 6 below).



*Fig 6: Kenn Pier Sluice, diverting potential flood water from the Kenn River at the west end of Nailsea Wall, into the Blind Yeo, constructed mid-20th century*

The circumstances leading to, and the construction of, the Blind Yeo were long and complex, and will be the subject of a separate report.

### *Course north of Kenn village*

That the Kenn has in the past had multiple sequential courses (as seen at West End, Nailsea - YCCCART 2022/Y3) is clear. The modern course to the north of Kenn village is described here. The potential (and probable) earlier course further north lies both sides of the M5, and is described in its own section below.



*Fig 6: Course of the Kenn River north of Kenn village from Kenn Pier to the M5 (2009)*

The smoothness of the line of the river here is a very clear sign of its artificiality. There is no trace of any sinuous natural course.

It is also noticeable, however, that the line of the river does not cut through previously established field systems (as does, for example, the Little River west of Yatton). Instead, the field boundaries all seem to respect the river and use its course as a pre-existing boundary, emphasising its early nature. Nor are field names shared on each side of the river, with the exception of the west end of the course, where references to the Stone Bow occur on both sides (see below).

While the date of these fields is not currently known, their irregular plans potentially imply medieval origins.

As raised previously (YCCCART) we should not take the Domesday description of '*Chen*' as a manor with one 'household' too literally: Domesday is a difficult source for very local history: I should not like to reconstruct a history of (say) Weston-super-Mare from the assembled tax returns of its inhabitants. And the compilers of Domesday's disdain for pastoral farming is clear and evident. The river details are more clear on the 1811 map of Kenn (SHC DD/SAS/C212/MAP/80) (Fig 7 below).









*Fig 8: The stone bow footpath bridge at Corpse Mead, Kenn*



*Fig 9: View upstream from Corpse Mead bridge of the (overgrown) Kenn River*



The rest of the course of the Kenn River to the M5 is non-contentious, but the alterations made during the construction of the M5 are significant.



*Fig 10: The site of 'Stone Bow' where the Clevedon Road crosses the Kenn River (1811)*

The same 1811 map as shown in Figure 7 indicates the existence of a structure referred to by adjacent field names (Fig 10 above) as 'Stone Bow' or plain 'Bow'. The name simply means 'a small hump-backed stone bridge', and is commonplace in minor field names.

The site was however, changed radically by the construction of the M5 motorway and the long accompanying road bridge on the Clevedon Road in 1970-1.

Unfortunately, recording of archaeological features alongside or close to the M5 during construction was not uniform, and the recording of a post-medieval bridge would have been a fairly low priority, however locally prominent.

Figure 11 (below) shows the alterations made during M5 construction at the Stone Bow. The Epoch 2 OS plan (c1885) is the base map, showing features before construction: red features are newly constructed roads, and heavy blue, redirected waterways, including the Kenn River. The site of the Stone Bow is now in the east side of M5 corridor at ST41136929: the bank is overgrown, so no potentially surviving structures are visible on passing. Note that part of the works to re-route the Kenn involved eliminating a section behind the former vicarage.

The Kenn eventually emerges into its 'original' channel on the west side of the M5 (see below).



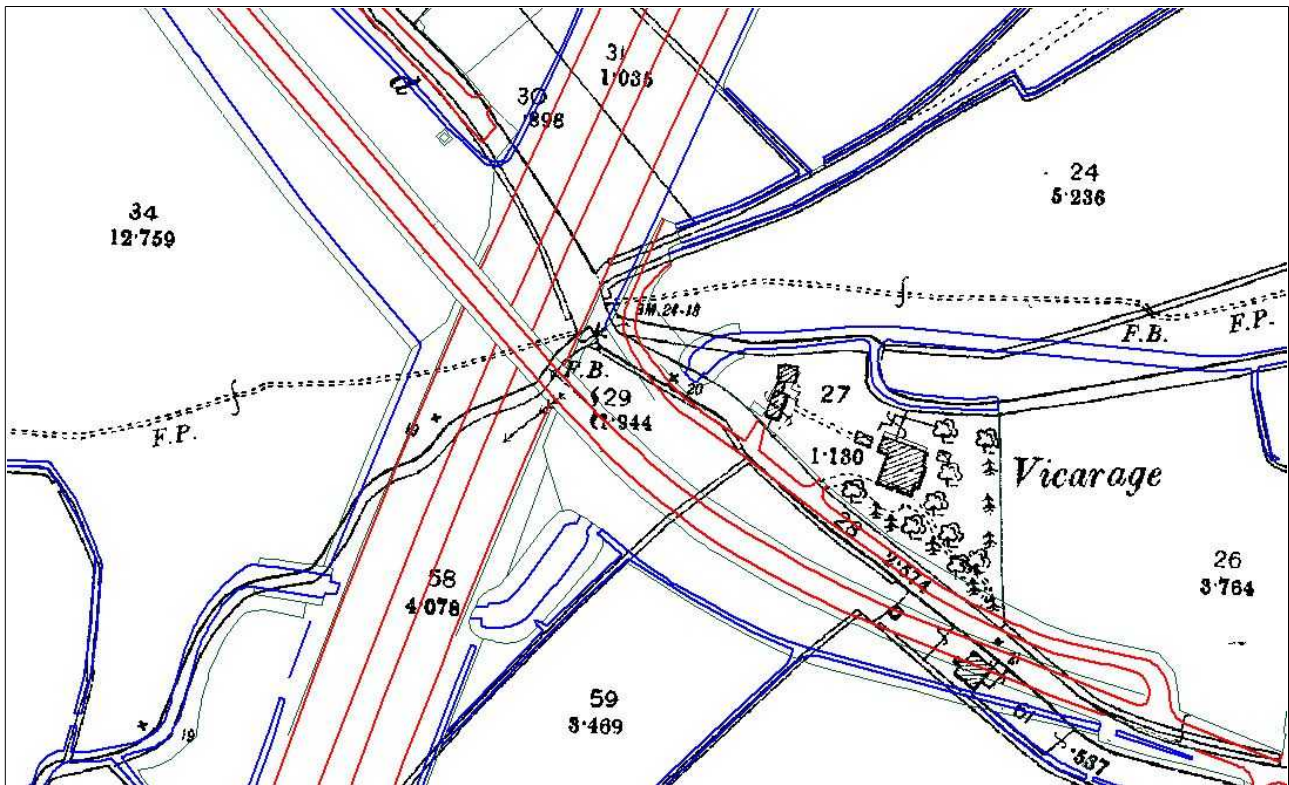
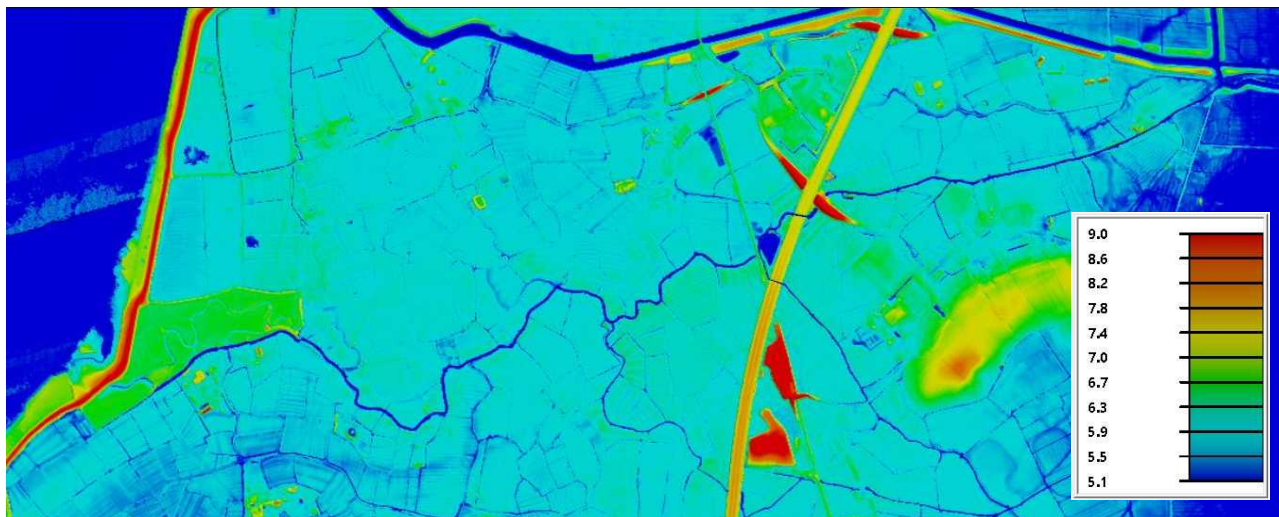


Fig 11: M5 changes at Stone Bow, Kenn

### *The northern route*

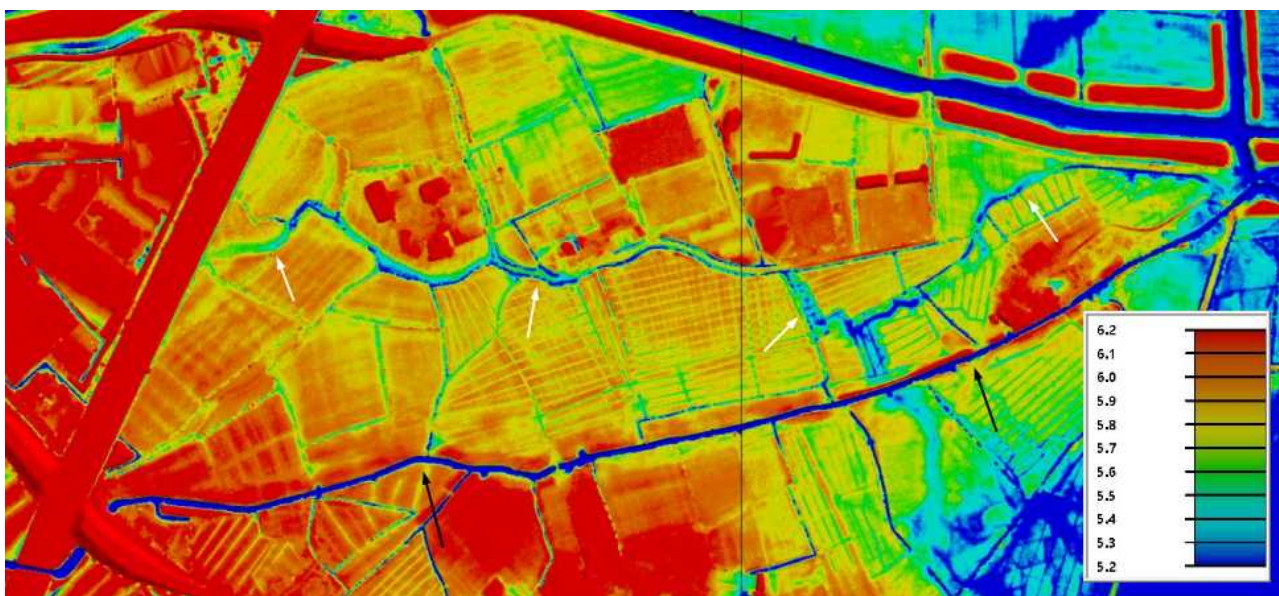
If the route of the Kenn River north of Kenn village today is artificial, where did the original river run?

A possible answer is revealed by the lidar scans for the area.



*Fig 12: The Kenn River from Nailsea Wall to the sea (heights AOD in metres)*

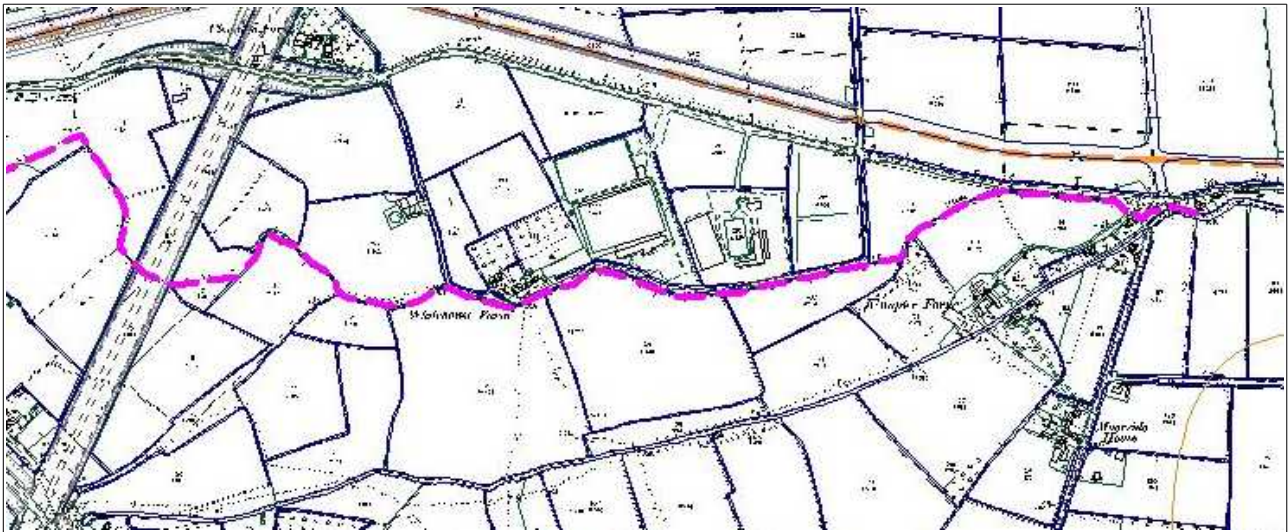
The lidar scan above clearly shows the modern course of the Kenn River (blue), with at least three natural or semi-natural tributaries entering from the south. This plot of course ignores the older sections of river close to the shore (see below). The sections to east and west of the M5 are clearly different: that to the west is more sinuous and natural, that to the east clearly is not. Note, however, that in the area immediately to the west of Kenn Pier Farm, there appears a separate potential river course, and this will now be explored.



*Fig 13: Current course (black arrows) and old course (white arrows) of Kenn north of village*



The line indicated as 'old course' above is generally 0.5-1.0m lower than its surroundings, and significantly, almost exactly coincides with the pre-20th century parish boundary of Kenn and Clevedon (Figure 14 below).



*Fig 14: Parish boundary of Kenn and Clevedon east of M5 (1885)*

It doesn't take much examination to see that the two lines are identical (with the exception of a short stretch to the west of Kenn Pier: the cutting off of this loop by a suspiciously straight section lying along Davis Lane is surely a later feature).

The choice of natural stream / river lines as guides for parish boundaries is evident (it was discussed in YCCART 2022/Y3) and it is hard to resist the idea that this was the early line of the Kenn before the present line was constructed.

West of the M5, the picture is complicated by modern developments.

The triangle of land between the M5 and the Clevedon Road B3133 was the former site of the Kenn windmill, which was demolished during works at the construction site.

The triangle was unfortunately developed before modern lidar scanning was undertaken in the area, which means any landscape feature representing the old parish boundary/course of the Kenn has been lost. Around Portbury House (ST40906983), the parish boundary in 1885 had already been compromised, with straight stretches of field boundaries (clearly of late post-medieval date) serving, along with numbers of 19th century boundary stones (see Fig 16 below). One of these stones survives further down the Kenn (see Fig 20 below).

The old parish boundary can be seen in the lidar as a sequence of linear ditches (white arrows on Figure 15). While not as obvious as those east of the modern M5, the coincidence of traditional parish boundary and matching lidar trace of ditches is surely significant.



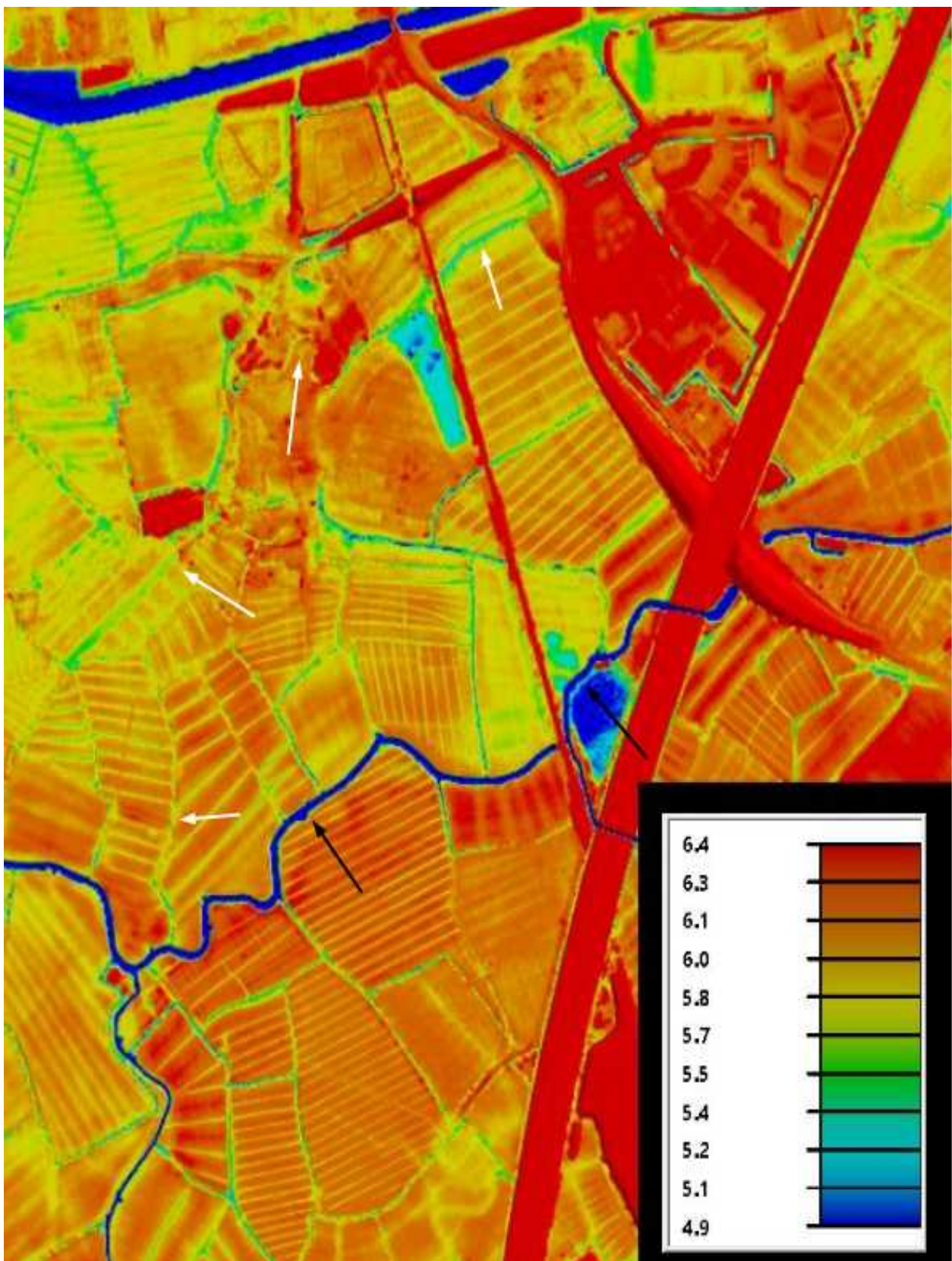
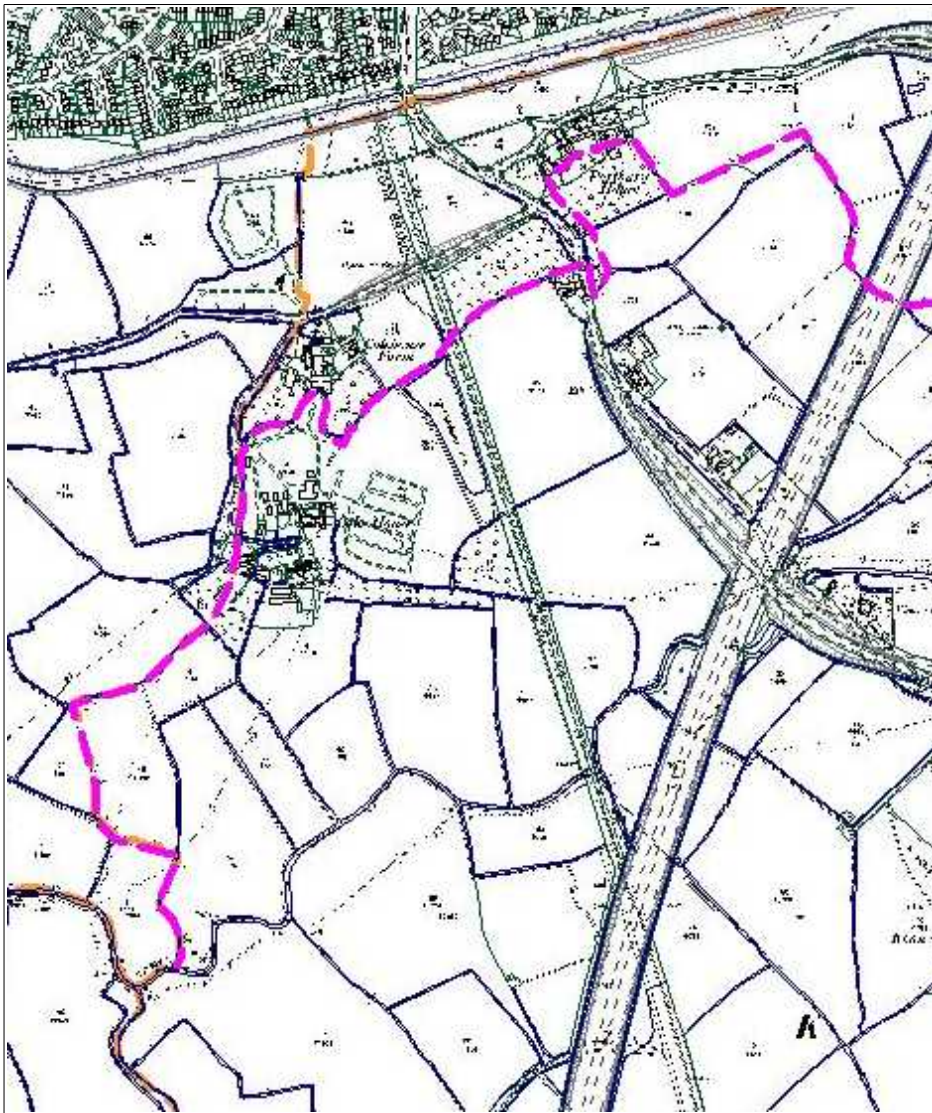


Fig 15: Lidar scan of Kenn between M5 and Bulbeck (current course marked by black arrows, old course by white)





*Fig 16: Kenn / Clevedon parish boundary, as mapped by OS (1885)*

The line of the old Kenn course/parish boundary joins the current course at ST4038768810, immediately adjacent to two earthwork features resembling small square moats, at which two Old Austers / Common Rights occur.

This coincides with an area named 'Bulbeck', where Lilly and Usher (1972), and later, Bob Smisson (pers. comm.) on evaluation found cobbled floors and high-status post-medieval pottery (Fig 17).

This northern, old course is fairly convincing in landscape terms (especially as one tenement usually listed under Kenn (e.g. in 1715 - SHC DD\PT/H452/43), specifically refers to 'one dwelling in Clevedon, one in Kenn', at a site almost certainly Colehouse (Fig 19 below), where both Colehouse Farm and Lake Farm, on either side of the line, contain late medieval structures, including the socket of a late medieval stone cross built into the corner of Lake Farm).

The clear question arising from this is why? Why construct a completely new channel for a river at (presumably) great expense? After all, the section of the river from Nailsea Wall to the Stone Bow (now under the M5) is approximately 1.8km long, and at current widths and depths, would involve the removal of at least 26 thousand tons of muck (and the river lacking sizable banks, this also had to be disposed of elsewhere).

Further south and west in Somerset, the apparently limitless resources of Glastonbury, Wells, Muchelney, Athelney et al. were carrying out such works during the high medieval period (say 1200-1350, with reduced activity after the climatic, economic and demographic disasters of the second quarter of the 14th century, culminating in the Black

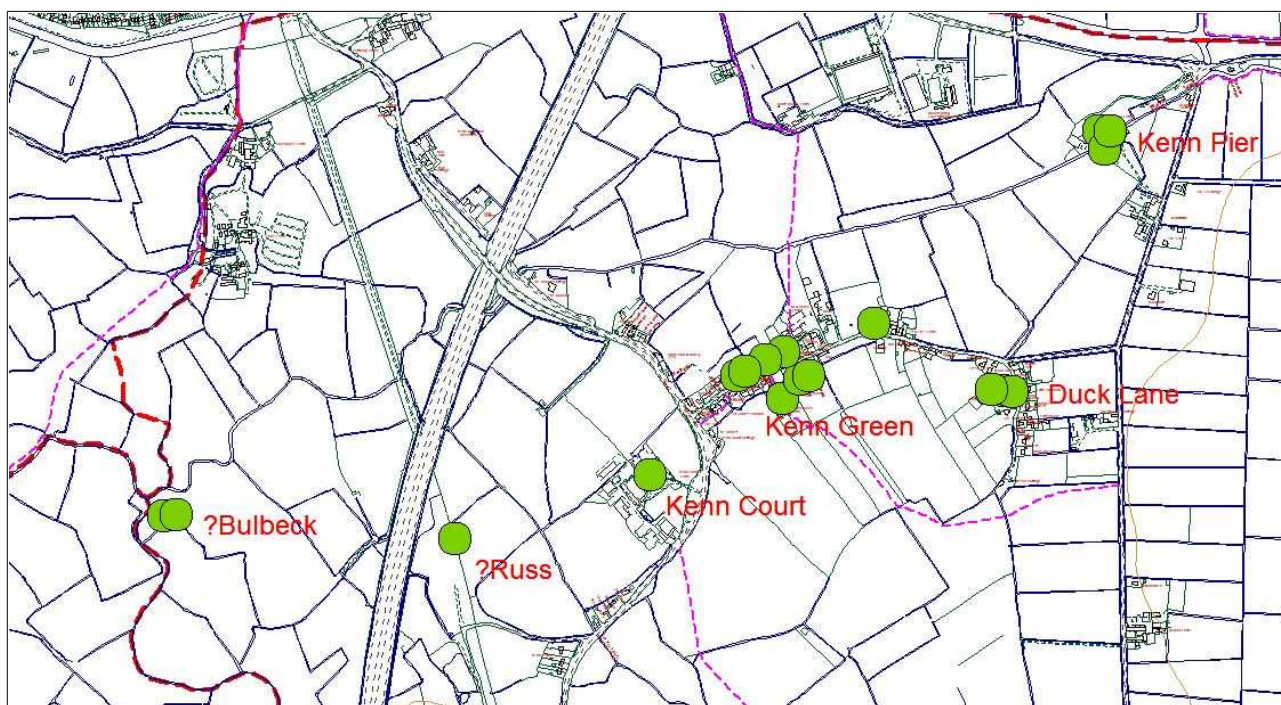


Death of 1349-52, and its resulting far-reaching social effects).

The re-routing of the Kenn north of Kenn village looks like either part of, or a response to, the construction of Nailsea Wall and its intended drainage activity role.

It is hard not to see the hand of Wells in these works. The Bishop held Yatton for centuries, and Kenn has always had a close relationship with that mother parish. Any medieval intention to 'improve' by drainage south of Nailsea Wall would have needed some way of disposing of excess water from Kenn Moor, and a more-or-less straight cut with an appropriate fall to the north of Kenn village, would have been far more effective than a shallow, winding waterway along the old parish boundary.

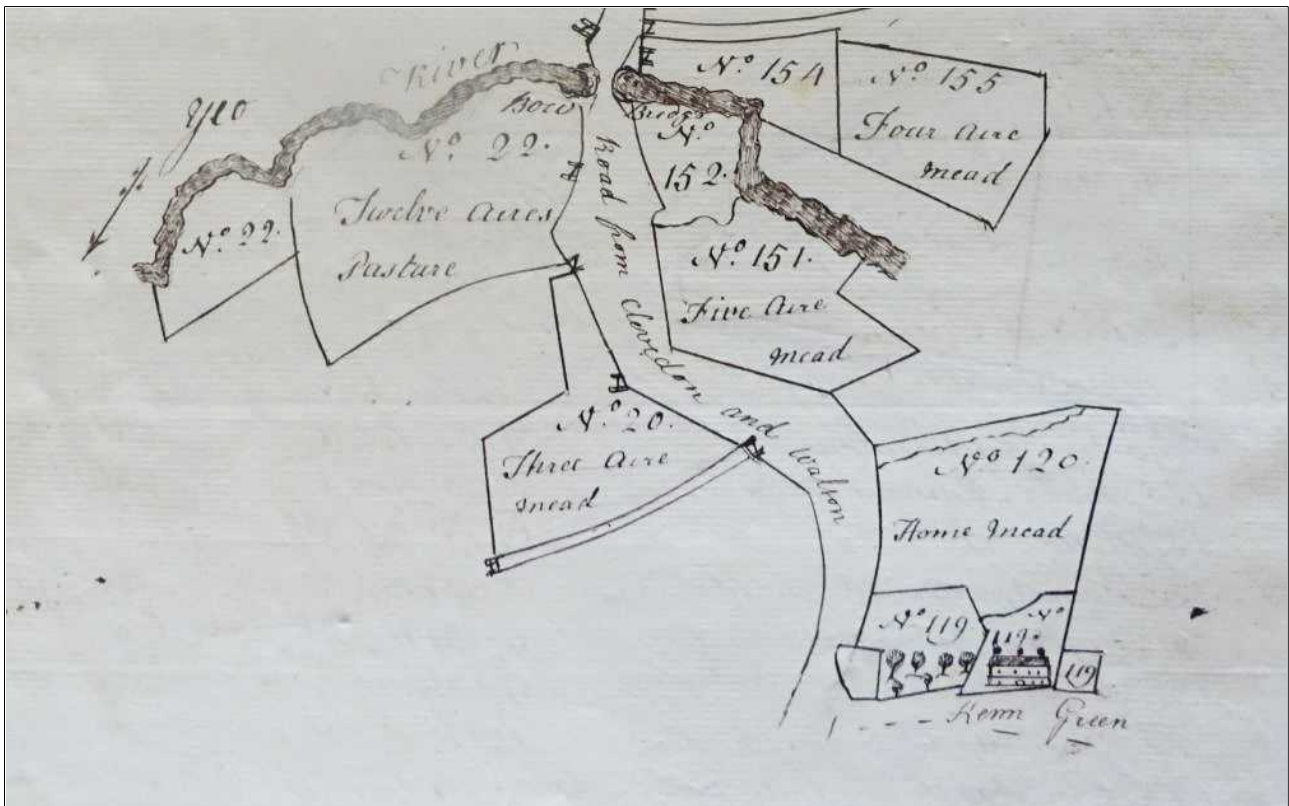
As far as can be ascertained, the documentary evidence for this activity has not survived, although it may still be buried somewhere is the mass of bishopric documents from Wells. Work will continue.



*Fig 17: Known Old Auster sites in Kenn manor: the current and old courses of the Kenn meet at Bulbeck, on the west side of the plan ( SHC DD/SAS/C212/7/1 - 1811)*

*'Current' course west of the M5 / Stone Bow*

As Figure 12 (above) shows (with the proviso that some areas at the extreme seaward end are omitted), the Kenn beyond the M5 / Stone Bow runs in a sinuous, semi-natural or even natural, course.



*Fig 18: Stone Bow ('Bow bridge') in 1780*

The stone bow is clearly a slightly unusual feature, for the field names and maps to make so specific a record of it.

The initial line of the Kenn River ('Yeo River' 1780 - Fig 18 above) (SHC DD\PT/H452/42) runs into the current course (note that even the dog-leg in the river above Stone Bow was already there). 'Kenn Green' (lower right) is now Kenn Street. Running past a field called 'Yawcratt' in 1811 ('river enclosure'), the sinuous course of the current river meets the old course at Bulbeck (see above). At this point, the Kenn River leaves its home parish, and becomes the parish boundary between Clevedon and Kingston Seymour.

This section of the Kenn looks sinuous and natural: however, if the 'older' course to the north on the parish boundary was its earlier form, then this section of river (from the M5 to Bulbeck) cannot itself be original Kenn. However, even a cursory look at the patterns of water on this area of the Northmarsh shows multiple palaeochannels, and it is possible that this line simply happened to be usefully at the west end when the 'new' line north of Kenn village was planned. Such uses of pre-existing semi-natural courses in new drainage schemes of the medieval period have many predecessors elsewhere.





*Fig 19: Kenn River west of Stone Bow / M5*

At Bulbeck, the Kenn captures the headwaters of the river forming the Kenn / Kingston boundary, which results in a change of direction as far as the Clevedon boundary stone at ST4013068925 (Fig 20 below).



*Fig 20: Nineteenth century boundary stone between Clevedon ('C') and Kingston Seymour ('K' on other side)*

The section of the river between this point and New Cut Bow (ST3930568602, where another boundary stone is recorded on OS maps, but doesn't appear to exist any more) features several abandoned stone farms and other buildings, some of which were cleared away in the 1990s.



*Fig 21: Former buildings along Kenn River (Clevedon Tithe Map 1840)*

The two buildings by the Clevedon boundary stone had gone by 1885 (OS); the two buildings in the centre of the figure remained as stone ruins in 1991 (see below), but by 2018, the farmstead (red on fig 21) had been cleared, with not even a scatter of pottery left to mark its spot (a stern lesson for landscape archaeologists!), while the barn (in grey) further down the river was completely covered in vegetation and more or less invisible by 2018 (see Figs 22 and 23 below).

'Burnt cottage' (so named on the 1885 OS plan) - the name tells its own story.

Perhaps in modern terms an odd place to build a dwelling, with no nearby roads, and even 150m from the current course of the Kenn, which might, at a pinch, serve for small water craft. The ruin of the building (Fig 24) survives in a field corner, only served by three footpaths which meet at a footbridge close to the cottage.

This small area of dispersed settlement, with farms and cottage strung along the river in the far reaches of Clevedon parish (and on the borders of the Hundreds of Portbury and Chewton marked by the Kenn River), along with the dispersed nature of settlement in Kenn (judging by the spread of Old Austers - Fig 17) is a salutary reminder of the complex nature of earlier settlement layout in the area now North Somerset. Indeed, some areas of North Somerset (especially Claverham or Clapton-in-Gordano, for example) seem far more like the 'highland' areas of England in settlement terms, than the 'central province' (with medieval nucleated villages and open fields), in which national surveys often place it.





*Fig 22: Farmstead ruins (No. 623 on Clevedon Tithe - Fig 21 above) in 1996, now removed*



*Fig 23: Stone building 614 (Clevedon Tithe map Fig 21 above) in 1996 (top) and 2018*





*Fig 24: The ruins of Burnt Cottage*

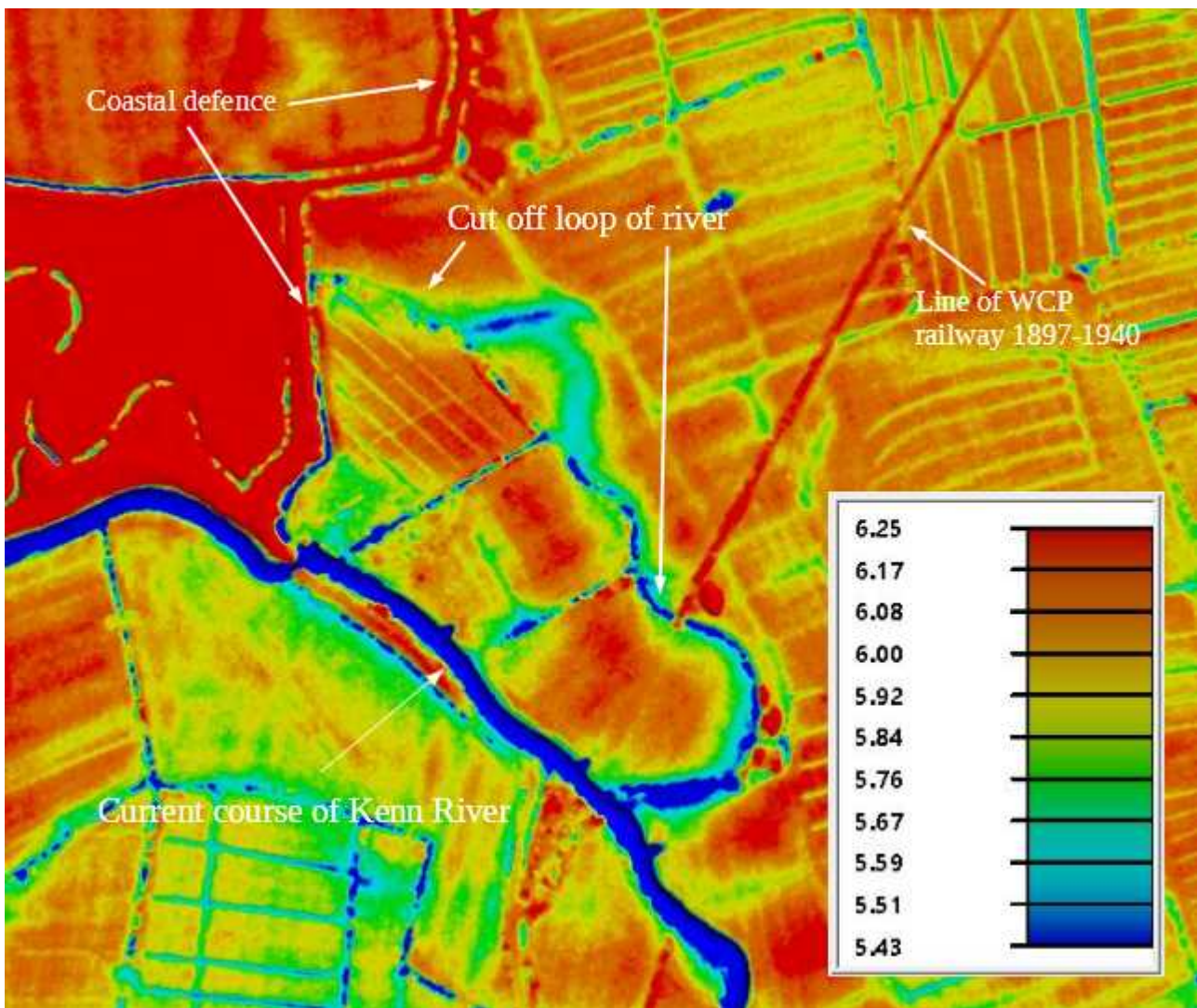
This section of the Kenn River then runs into an area known as 'New Cutt', with its accompanying bridge (and road) name 'New Cut Bow'.

This designates an area of land within a loop of the Kenn River (the land lying in Kingston Seymour parish): this is not (despite the 'new' element in its name) a new phenomenon: fields in the area have been known as 'New Cutt' since 1655 at least (SHC DD\EN/23).

As I have pointed out elsewhere, 'new' is a dangerous place-name element to use as landscape evidence, since it only means new to the people who named it. A classic case of this is the use of the name 'New Cut' to describe a canalised section of the river Axe, near Clewer in Wedmore, which name, despite being in current use, dates to the re-engineering of the river by Glastonbury Abbey in 1317.

The loop of the river cut off by the works at New Cut Bow still exists as a palaeochannel (Fig 25 below), and the parish boundary between Clevedon and Kingston Seymour still runs along it, never having relocated to the new course.





*Fig 25: New cut bow and associated features, Kenn River*

The realignment of the river course to the south of the coastal defence banks at Sutte Pill is also pre-1840 in date (Kingston Seymour Tithe Map), so little water now flows into the sinuous course outside of the coastal defences.

The realigned river, however, discharges through a sluice in the banks at ST3859368535, west of Treble House farm, and eventually into the old course and the intertidal zone.

Sutte Pill is marked on some small scale maps of Somerset (Gardner 1998), and seems to have been regarded as a creek of Bristol in the post-medieval period, although documentary evidence is very thin: neither is there much archaeological evidence, although an undated 'wooden jetty' is recorded in the river at ST3853068687 (Hildich 1997). Any other evidence is probably buried under the c2m of saltmarsh around the river bed.





*Fig 26: Land between old and new courses at New Cut Bow*

The palaeochannel of the old river course is visible on Fig 26 as a green zone between the apple trees.



*Fig 27: Sutte Pill and Treble House from the sea*

Once the river course heads outside of the coastal defences, a fairly stable course runs across the inter-tidal zone.



It runs between several scatters of wooden stakes, preserved in the waterlogged and anoxic muds of the zone, and largely relating to the former on-shore fishing industry of the area.



*Fig 28: V-shaped fishtrap in inter-tidal zone, channel of Kenn River in background*

## **So - who did make the Kenn River?**

Even more than in Part 1 (YCCCART2022/Y3), this question is very relevant, since it is obvious that great lengths of the Kenn River (probably as much as 70%) are artificial, and thus must have been planned, constructed and paid for by someone or some body.

While the effort that went into the construction of the Kenn River north of Kenn village, with its 26,000 tons of muck to be shifted, is mentioned above, this ignores the works that went into the construction of Nailsea Wall and its accompanying rhynes on each side, the various courses of the Kenn on the west end of Nailsea island, the realignment of the river at New Cut in Kingston Seymour, and doubtless, many smaller and not so obvious works.

Whereas Steve Rippon came to the conclusion that landscape changes in medieval Puxton and surroundings had been planned and carried out by the local community (Rippon 2006), it seems unlikely to have been the case here, especially in the lower reaches of the Kenn, and the hand of a very powerful (and rich!) land owner or organisation must be suspected.

Both Glastonbury and Wells were known for their works in establishing (or perhaps upgrading) mill leats (the works to the Congresbury Yeo to feed Iwood and West Mills there seem highly likely to have been the work of Wells when in ownership in the 11th century: both mills seem to have been active at Domesday), and Wells was the only corporate body that had significant land-holdings in the Northmarsh in the medieval period (others, such as Woodspring Priory or St Marks, Bristol) were small players, or their documentation does not survive.

Whether the secular land-owners of the area possessed the resources to accomplish these engineering feats is doubtful, but work to check on this is currently ongoing.



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## Date

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*Multiple parishes, Documentary and photographic study, Kenn River (lower course), 2022, Y10, v.1*

## Appendices

### *Problem - 18th century small-scale maps*

As always with small-scale 18th century maps covering large areas (say, Day and Masters map of Somerset in 1782, or Donn's '30 miles around Bristol' in c1770), the problem of depiction at the extreme local level is acute.



*Fig 29: Kenn Moor and surroundings from Donn (c1770)*

Several problems immediately emerge from this map.

Firstly, the line of river shown clearly at the southern side of Kenn Moor, is that today known as the Little River, running uninterrupted from Chelvey to the crossing of the Yatton ridge at Northend. Today, this is a secondary river supplied from the current Kenn by a sluice at Sluice Style, whence the route of the Kenn flows northwards.

The route on Donn's map is represented by a dotted line, which represents the boundary between Hundreds: no river course is shown until the two streams (seemingly the proto-Kenn and the Gardner river) rise in the north of the Kenn Moor, to run past Kenn decoy



Pool, and thence westwards.

Nailsea Wall is not acknowledged by the map, despite its being of 15th century origin at latest (see above).

This lack of waterways is contradicted by the 1780 portrayal of the area around Wickerell Wood in Kenn (although near Nailsea Court) (Fig 30 below)



Fig 30: Wickerell/all Wood area (1780) (north to left) (SHC DD\PT/H452/42)

This clearly shows that in 1780, a 'new' and an 'antient' course of the Kenn River were present. For a river course to be called 'antient', it clearly cannot have been dug in the 10 years since Donn's map, and the sequence of watercourses in this area was outlined in YCCCART2022/Y3, indicating at least some water flowing through this area.

This is given support by the Ordnance Survey 1st draft of c1810 (Fig 31 below), which shows a watercourse flowing along the West End of Nailsea island.

Perhaps we should draw the conclusion that Donn's map, interesting and useful as it is, is flawed at an extremely local level, where stream courses (at least) are approximated on the map, probably from extrapolating the courses between fixed points such as road bridges.

Donn's map shows two further watercourses arising in Kenn Moor: one flowing immediately south of Kenn Court, and a second further south. These are (extreme) approximations of watercourses visible on lidar scans, but which have been very heavily modified into drainage rhynes during the 19th and 20th centuries.



*Fig 31: Kenn Moor in c1810 before Inclosure (OS First Draft in British Library)*

The OS c1810 First Draft map of Kenn Moor before Inclosure shows the watercourses around Kenn Moor before Inclosure (including the Kenn and Little Rivers), as well as acknowledging Nailsea Wall, perhaps clarifying the situation.

However, early small-scale maps are not entirely pointless in examining the Kenn River. A quick look at the Greenwood map of Somerset (1822) (Gardner 1998), with the first really clear indication of the borders of Hundreds in the area, shows that the southern boundary of Portbury Hundred (against Chewton (Brockley) and Winterstoke (Yatton)) runs along the Kenn as far as Kenn Pier, where it leaves the river to follow the old Blind Yeo.

Very significantly, the Hundred boundary rejoins the river north of Portbury Farm, and follows the old line of the river (Figures 15-16 above), probably as far as Bulbeck, although there is some approximation due to scale. Along with the Clevedon/Kenn parish boundary, this is very strong evidence for the former existence of the northern route of the Kenn.

The Portbury Hundred boundary (now against Chewton again, Kingston Seymour parish) then follows the river to the sea.

### *Problem 2: Lack of contemporary documentation*

One of the problems faced in the study in the Landscape Archaeology of Somerset's North



Marsh is lack of documentation from much before 1500AD.

Compared with the situation in Somerset, the Northmarsh has little surviving documentary evidence of the kind produced by the great monasteries there: Wells is the only ecclesiastical body that owned areas of the Northmarsh, and either the evidence for medieval and post-medieval river engineering does not exist there, or (probably more likely) it has not yet been looked for, much less found.

An effort to find any such survivals would be well worth making.