



Site Report for October 2010  
visit to fields around  
Victory Park  
Brislington  
Bristol

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Brislington Fields table by Libby Houston.

Photographs of trees by Libby Houston .

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# Contents

Introduction	4
Site location	4
Historical background	5
Previous work on the site	12
Methodology	14
Finds	14
Interpretation of the excavation	19
Proposals for future work	21
Conclusion	23
Bibliography	23
Acknowledgements	24

# Illustrations & tables

1780 Enclosure Award map	6
1846 Tithe map	7
1846 Tithe apportionment	8
1886 Ordnance Survey map	9
1920 drawing of Victory Park	11
Photographs of old trees	12
Table of old and veteran trees	13
Photograph of bomb crater	15
Photograph of hedge	16

# Introduction

All references to field numbers are to the 1846 Tithe map (with the 1886 Ordnance Survey map in parentheses).

This site visit and survey were conducted by BCAP members Steve Pearce and Ken Taylor on 9th October 2010 (this was followed the next day at by a public demonstration of surveying techniques, which was led by Steve Pearce assisted by Doreen Lindegaard and Dawn Witherspoon).

## Site location

The region consists of numerous hills and ridges bounded by the Mendip Hills approximately 15km to the south, the Cotswold Hills approximately 10km to the east, and the Severn Estuary approximately 15km to the west, with the Severn valley extending to the north.

The district of Brislington lies within the city of Bristol and is approximately 2.5 km to the east of the city centre. It is situated to the south of the river Avon, and is now almost completely covered with urban development, mainly residential. The fields that form the site under investigation are surrounded to the north by a modern school and housing development, to the west by Victory Park and School Road, to the east by a modern industrial development, and to the south by Victory Park and a small cluster of fields (of which some at least are included in a Conservation Area) around Oakenhill Farm.

At the heart of the site is a valley descending from the southeast to the northwest. The fields form a roughly rectangular block of approximately fifteen meadows separated by hedgerows. They are situated either side of the valley through which a small stream flows toward the northwest and becoming a tributary of Brislington Brook. The fields extend up both sides of the valley and onto plateaux to the north and south. The stream is augmented by at least one smaller stream from each side.

The site is located at UK Ordnance Survey grid squares ST 6270 and ST 6271 (more precise grid references are given for find spots etc. below).

## Historical background

This report has been written to a tight deadline dictated by the progress of the Site Allocation public consultation organised by Bristol City Council.

Stone tools dating from the Middle Palaeolithic have been found within 1.5km to the southeast (Bates 2005). Within the same distance, to the west, Neolithic flints have been found (for example BHER 11389).

The site lies within the domain of the Iron Age tribe known as the Dobunni although following the Roman conquest, a civil administration was established that separated the area from the Dobunnii people and it was included in the newly created canton of the Belgae (Aston 1986, 53). A Roman villa was built c. 270 approximately 1km west of the fields, and was destroyed, probably by Irish raiders, c 370 (Aston 1986, 60 & 69).

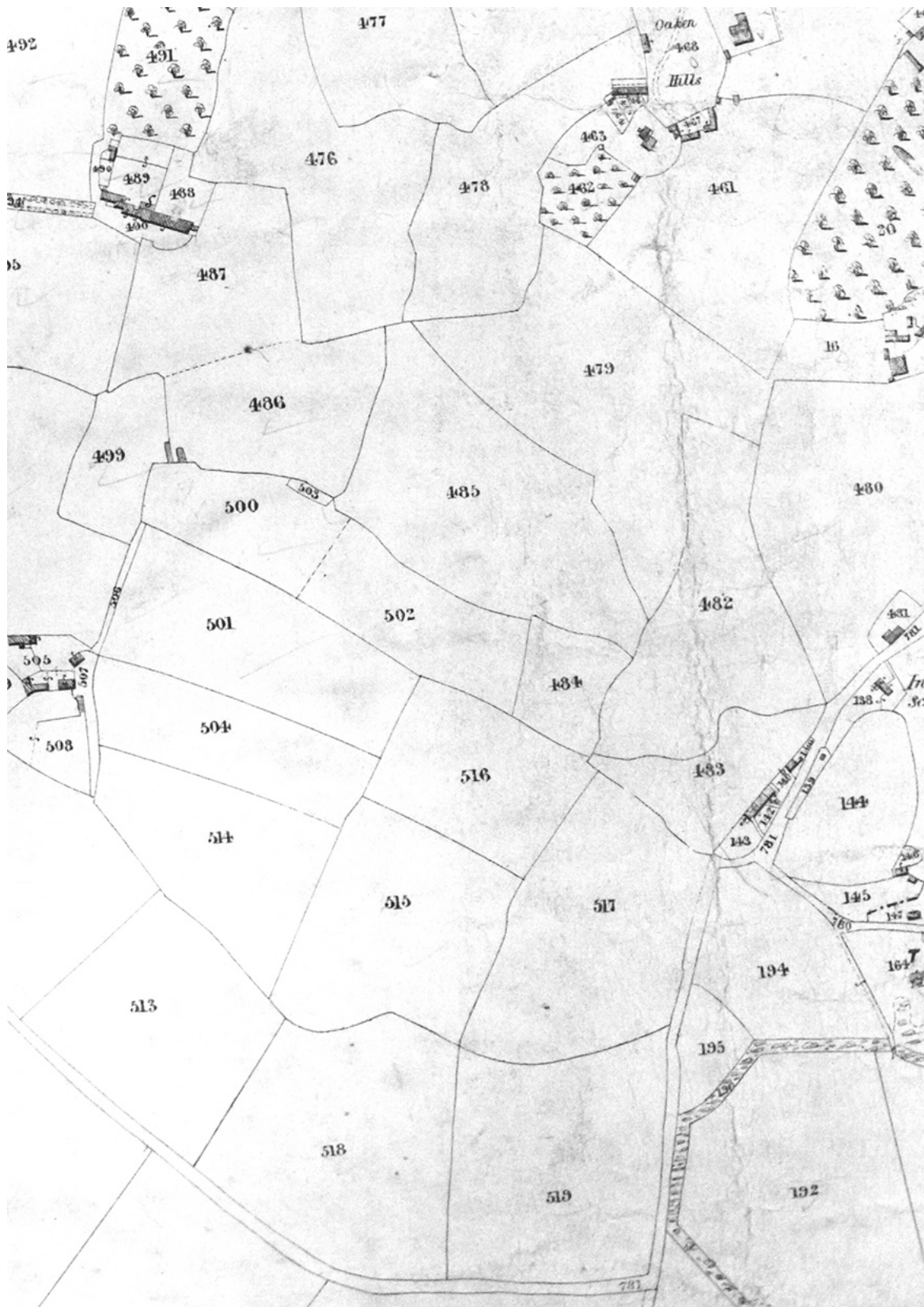
The place-name Brislington is Anglo Saxon in origin, and means "Beorhthelm's Farmstead", with Beorhthelm being an Old English personal name (Mills 1998, 56). Following the battle of Dyrham in 577, in which the native Britons were defeated by the Saxons, the victors took possession of local territories south of the river Avon (Savage 1995, 36). By around 850 the area was fully integrated into the Saxon kingdom of Wessex. By 900 Alfred the Great had unified all the Saxon kingdoms to the extent where he was lauded as king of all the English (Aston 1986, 79-80). In 1045 Brislington was part of the Saxon Manor of Cainessam (now Keynsham), which was owned by Queen Edith, wife of King Edward the Confessor. Upon Queen Edith's death in 1075 the Manor of Keynsham reverted to the Crown, i.e. William I.

In 1087 the Manor of Brislington was given to Robert Fitzhamon, a Norman knight who received the Manor from his cousin, King William II. This gift detached the village of Brislington from its earlier inclusion in the extensive Manor of Keynsham. Robert Fitzhamon died in 1107, and the Manor was held in trust by Henry I for Mabel, Fitzhamon's eldest daughter. She married Robert Earl of Gloucester and on his death in 1148, the manor passed to his son William Earl of Gloucester. On the death of William in 1173, the manor passed to Henry II in trust for Henry's younger son John (later King John). Henry, however, gave it to Isabel, the late Earl's sister. On Isabel's marriage to John in 1189, at her request the Manor of Brislington was granted to Sir John la Warr (this was confirmed in a Charter of 1207). (Rowe 1987, 1-2).

The Manor of Brislington was bought from the de la Warr family by John Lacy in 1586. In 1650 the manor house of Brislington was Brislington Farm (later known as Langton Court). In 1667 the manor was sold by Rowland Lacy to Sir Thomas Langton. Early in the 18th century the manorial estate began to be sold off in a piecemeal fashion. The 1870 Enclosure Award map shows the site marked "Brislington Old Enclosures" indicating the site was already partitioned and in private ownership at that time.

Oakenhill Farm lies to the south of the site and some of the fields belonged to it. Oakenhill may date to as early as the 17th century (Rowe & Williams, 1986), and was sold to the Clayfield-Ireland family in or around 1794. It was subsequently transferred into the possession of the Hurle family. James Meredith resided at Oakenhill Farm from 1810 until his death in 1859. Between 1866 and 1879 the farm was rented by George Vowels. In 1901 John Tomkins was resident at Oakenhill Farm, and the 20th century saw a succession of owners (Rowe & Williams, 1986).



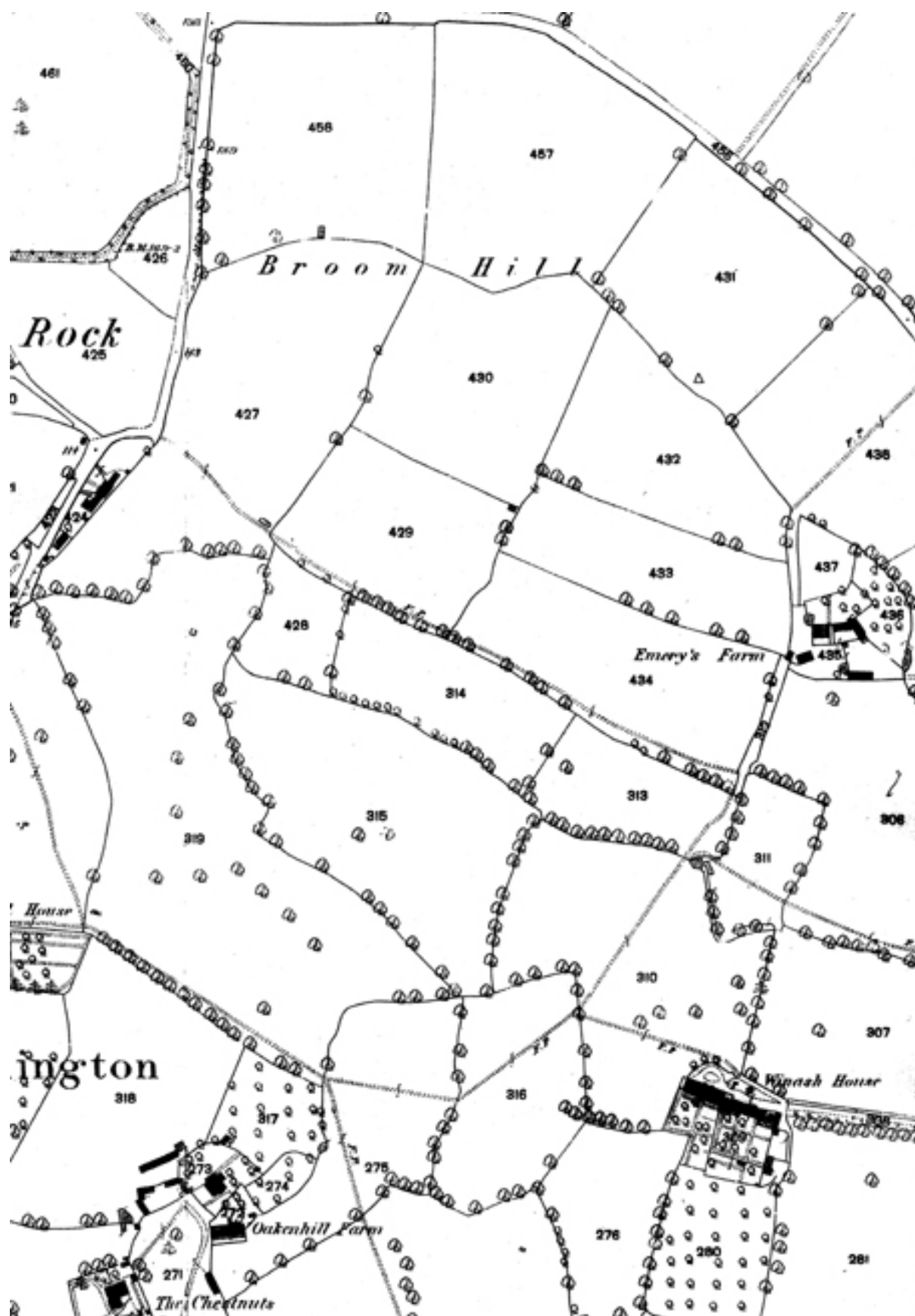


1846 Tithe map (north is at the bottom, south at the top)

# 1846 Tithe apportionment

Field	Name	Land use	Rented by	Owned by
461	Home Field	pasture	James Meredith	Isaac Cooke
462	Orchard	pasture orchd.	James Meredith	Isaac Cooke
476	Field	pasture	William Weymouth	William Weymouth
478	Five Acres	pasture	James Meredith	Isaac Cooke
479	Blackers Wood	pasture	James Meredith	Isaac Cooke
480	Moons Pasture	pasture	Charles Gould	Isaac Cooke
482	Six Acres	pasture	James Meredith	Isaac Cooke
483	Lower Broomhill	pasture	George Williams	John Hurle
484	Part Of Four Acres	pasture	Robert Harrill (Jun)	William Gore Langton
485	Blackers Wood	pasture	James Meredith	Isaac Cooke
486	Part Of Seven Acres	pasture	Thomas Kenn	George Weare Braikenridge
487	Part Of Seven Acres	pasture	Thomas Kenn	George Weare Braikenridge
499	Paddock	pasture	Thomas Kenn	George Weare Braikenridge
500	Paddock	pasture	Robert Harrill (Jun)	William Gore Langton
501	Five Acres	pasture	Robert Harrill (Jun)	William Gore Langton
502	Blackers Wood	pasture	James Meredith	Isaac Cooke
503	Withy Bed	withy bed	Robert Harrill (Jun)	William Gore Langton
504	Three Acres	pasture	Robert Harrill (Jun)	William Gore Langton
514	Two Acres	arable	Robert Harrill (Jun)	William Gore Langton
515	Pool Close	arable	Robert Harrill (Jun)	William Gore Langton
516	Four Acres	pasture	Robert Harrill (Jun)	William Gore Langton
517	Middle Broomhill	pasture	George Williams	John Hurle





1886 Ordnance Survey map (1:2500)

Other fields, probably to the north of the stream, are most likely to have been farmed by the inhabitants of Emery's Farm (now demolished) to the northeast of the site. Census returns show Emery Farm was inhabited by the family of Alfred Henry Tomkins who employed two men in 1861. In 1871 Emery's Farm consisted of 65 acres, in 1881 it had 76 acres. Alfred Tomkins died 29th November 1886 (newspaper obituary 01.12.1886) aged 66. In 1891 his sons Arthur and John were farmers there.

The 1886 Ordnance Survey map (1:2500) shows most of the fields have retained the boundaries depicted on the 1846 Tithe map. The 1886 map also shows many other items of interest, not least of which is a footpath running through the fields of the site, heading southeast from the Rock towards Keynsham.

The pattern of hedgerows to the south of the footpath is relatively amorphous, and the hedges themselves include many trees large enough to warrant marking on the map. In comparison, the hedgerows to the north of this footpath appear to be relatively regular as if planned together at one time, and although it predates the enclosure of Brislington Common in 1780, it is likely to represent a later phase of enclosure than those to the south of the footpath.

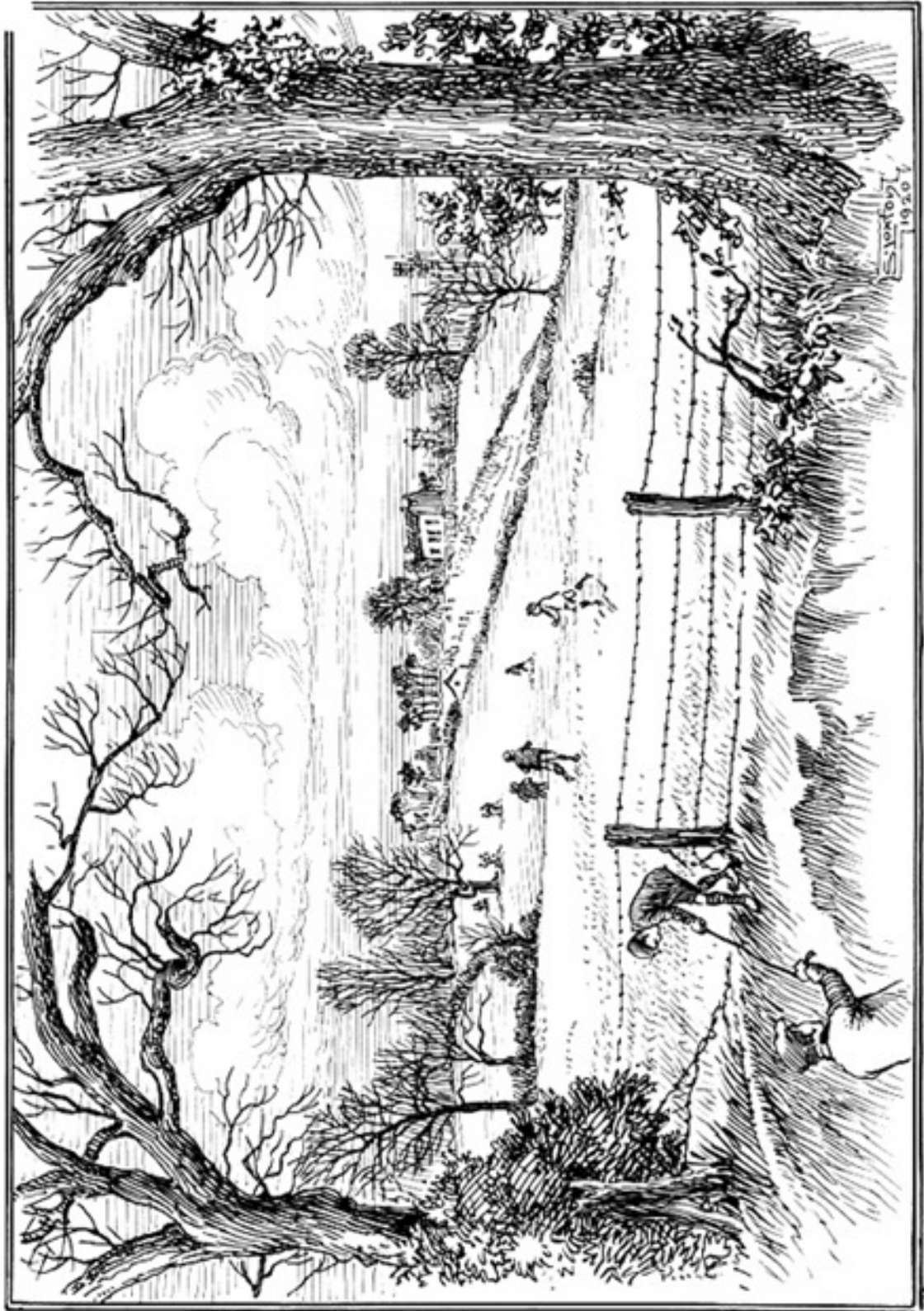
The date of the footpath is uncertain but may be early medieval as this path appears to have connected The Rock to Keynsham. In the period before the Church of St Luke was built in Brislington in the 15th century, the closest church was at Keynsham, and Keynsham was also a market town. This may have been a popular route for many centuries.

The history of ownership of the fields during the modern period is the subject of ongoing research. However, it can be noted that these fields escaped the late 19th century wave of encroachment from Bristol, when parts of the village of Brislington became assimilated into the city, but they were incorporated into Bristol along with the remainder of the village in the 1930s.

In 1920 a small portion of the land of which the site is part, was given to the parish for use as a public park. This was named Victory Park. It was sketched by the artist Samuel Loxton in 1920, the view extending to the southwest towards the Vicarage. The tower of the church of St Luke is just visible to the right of the tall tree to the right of the Vicarage. The gully in the foreground, in which the man is standing, is a tributary of the stream that flows through the valley.

The hedge on the far left of the sketch still stands. It appears to make a right-angled turn, but that is simply an illusion of perspective. The closest part of the hedge, running down the hill and away from the viewer, is a hedge between fields 482 (319) and 484 (428). The further part of that hedge, running up the slope (on the far side of the stream) borders fields 479 (319) and 485 (315). Fields 482 and 479 (combined as 319) are now part of Victory Park.

Bomb census maps (Anon, undated) show that on either the night of 25th-26th April 1942 or 4th-5th August 1942, a German bomb fell on field 484 (428) (ST 624710).



Victory Park 1920, by Samuel Loxton



The fields contain several public footpaths, at least one of which appears to be of some antiquity, and there are well-worn footpaths through many of the fields, showing the routes trodden by local people for generations.

Several of the fields at the western side are currently given over to allotments, The five fields to the north of the footpath have been grazed by cattle in recent years, while horses generally graze the half-a-dozen fields to the south.

## Previous work on the site

No previous archaeological work is known to have been conducted at this site. However, some local people, through long acquaintance with the site have volunteered information about certain features within it.

A survey of plants in some of the fields was conducted Dr Helena Crouch, Libby Houston and Dr Margaret Webster (all members of Bristol Naturalists' Society, the Botanical Society of the British Isles, and Somerset Rare Plants Group) on 15 October 2010. Although rather late in the season for such a survey, the group found all four fields visited (all south of the footpath) were species-rich, and that the field identified as 484 (428) was "species-rich semi-improved neutral grassland" which is a phrase that not only describes the important ecology of the site, but is often employed to denote meadows that have remained essentially unchanged for centuries, perhaps longer.

Libby Houston also surveyed fifteen trees at the site, all of which were estimated to be more than a century old. Several were classified as "Truly Ancient" according to guidelines issued by Defra (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs 2007, 135-6).



**Field maple**



**Ash**



**Oak**

## Some veteran and near-veteran trees (revised)

## Brislington Fields

Common Name	Taxonomic Name	Description/Notes	Circumference: metres	Diameter: metres*	Veteran tree rule-of-thumb status*	Age in years: rough estimate*	Location	GPS: ST	Accuracy: ± metres	Date
English Oak (1) [also (2) & (3)]	<i>Quercus robur</i>	Maiden: 2nd and largest/oldest of 3 oaks along bank, with long scar - from lightning? The other 2 are also fine <b>old</b> maidens roughly estimated at less than 1.02m diameter. <i>Photo</i> .	c.3.56	c.1.13	Potentially interesting	c.180	Streambed between Park and allotments: on bank on Park side, opposite allotment fence	62367 71065	6	18.10.10
English Oak (4)	<i>Quercus robur</i>	Old pollard with massive root spread. Scarred upper stem. <i>Photo</i> .	c.4.34	c.1.38	Potentially interesting	c.250	NW corner of <b>Field 9</b> , by gateway	62486 71085	5	18.10.10
English Oak (5)	<i>Quercus robur</i>	Maiden: hedgerow tree. <i>Photo</i> .	c.3.54	c.1.13	Potentially interesting	c.180	In hedgerow on N side <b>Field 9</b>	62501 71076	3	18.10.10
English Oak (6)	<i>Quercus robur</i>	Maiden; long scar. <i>Photo</i>	c.3.07	c.0.97	Near 'potentially interesting'	c.150	Hedgerow, by gateway between E side of <b>Field 9</b> , W side <b>Field 8</b>	62516 71063	6	15.10.10
English Oak (7)	<i>Quercus robur</i>	Maiden: hedgerow tree. <i>Photo</i> .	c.3.06	c.0.97	Near 'potentially interesting'	c.150	Hedgerow on N side <b>Field 8</b>	62627 71011	5	18.10.10
English Oak (8)	<i>Quercus robur</i>	Maiden, pollard, W side gap [to Field 12]; E side oak has oddly contorted form. <i>Photos</i>	c.4.75	c.1.51	Potentially interesting	c.290	On streambank, N side <b>Field 12</b> , on W side gateway/gap to <b>Field 8</b>	62617 70931	6	18.10.10
English Oak (9)	<i>Quercus robur</i>	Maiden: pollard, large area missing bark. <i>Photo</i> .	c.5.10	c.1.62	<b>Valuable</b>	c.320	In open field, in S half <b>Field 12</b>	62543 70887	5	18.10.10
English Oak (10)	<i>Quercus robur</i>	Maiden: pollard; substantial scarring above: lightning? <i>Photo</i>	c.4.60	c.1.46	Potentially interesting	c.270	In open field, in S half <b>Field 12</b> , c.18m W of Oak No.9	62525 70887	3	18.10.10
English Oak (11)	<i>Quercus robur</i>	Maiden: condition not recorded. <i>Photos</i>	c.3.42	c.1.08	Potentially interesting	c.170	Hedgerow on W side <b>Bonville Road Open Space</b> , N side of gateway/gap to <b>Field 15</b>	62592 70727	5	15.10.10
English Oak (12)	<i>Quercus robur</i>	Maiden: condition not recorded. <i>Photos</i>	c.3.03	c.0.96	Near 'potentially interesting'	c.145	Hedgerow on W side <b>Bonville Road Open Space</b> , S side of gateway/gap to <b>Field 15</b>	62592 70722	8	15.10.10
English Oak (13)	<i>Quercus robur</i>	Maiden: condition not recorded. <i>Photos</i>	c.3.01	c.0.96	Near 'potentially interesting'	c.145	On bank in hedgerow, on W side <b>Bonville Road Open Space</b> (E of <b>Field 15</b> )	62595 70703	5	15.10.10
Field Maple (1)(a)	<i>Acer campestre</i>	Either: 3-stem coppice, or maiden + 2-stem coppice: (a) is possible maiden. <i>Photos</i>	c.1.53	c.0.49	<b>[Valuable]</b>	c.200	Hedgerow between Park & N end <b>Field 15</b> : (northern of 3 stems)	62518 70757	7	09.10.10
Field Maple (1)(b)	<i>Acer campestre</i>	Tree either 3-stem coppice or maiden + 2-stem coppice: measurement (b) of 'central' coppice stem. <b>NB coppice stool not measured.</b> <i>Photos</i>	c.2.84	c.0.90	<b>Truly ancient'</b>	over 200	Hedgerow between Park & N end <b>Field 15</b>	62517 70957	7	18.10.10
Field Maple (2)	<i>Acer campestre</i>	3-stem coppice: N stem measured. <b>NB coppice stool not measured.</b> <i>Photo</i>	c.2.64	c.0.84	<b>Truly ancient'</b>	over 200	Hedgerow between Park & W side <b>Field 15</b>	62499 70728	8	09.10.10
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Maiden. <i>Photos</i>	c.4.69	c.1.50	<b>Truly ancient'</b>	c.265	Hedgerow on W side <b>Bonville Road Open Space</b> (NE of <b>Field 15</b> )	62596 70736	5	09.10.10

\*Categories 'potentially interesting', 'valuable' and 'truly ancient' [devised by Read (2000)] are based on diameter measurements, in relation to maximum trunk sizes recorded by Mitchell (1974) for each species. Taken from: **Veteran tree rule of thumb trunk diameters**. Appendix 10 in Defra (2007) *Hedgerow Survey Handbook*. A standard procedure for local surveys in the UK. Defra, London. © Crown copyright, 2007. Age estimation based on Forestry Commission formula (White 1998). (NB This will not apply to conical trees).

\*Categories 'potentially interesting', 'valuable' and 'truly ancient' [devised by Read (2000)] are based on diameter measurements, in relation to maximum trunk sizes recorded by Mitchell (1974) for each species. Taken from: **Veteran tree rule of thumb trunk diameters**, Appendix 10 in Defra (2007) *Hedgerow Survey Handbook*. A standard procedure for local surveys in the UK. Defra, London. © Crown copyright 2007. Age estimation based on Forestry Commission formula (White 1998). (NB This will not apply to coppiced trees).

The potentially oldest of the three species surveyed as are follows:

- 1) Field Maple (*Acer campestre*) at ST 62517 70957 in the hedgerow at the north of field 478 (275). This "Truly Ancient" tree is growing alongside two other trunks and they may actually all be a single, coppiced tree. Coppicing is a woodsman's technique that involves cutting the trunk not far from the ground. This encourages new growth to sprout, and the new boughs may be harvested – often for use as poles. This tree was estimated to be over 200 years old, with a probable germination date in the 18th century.
- 2) Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) at ST 62596 70736 in the hedgerow at the west of field 478 (275). The age of this "Truly Ancient" tree was determined using guidelines issued by the Forestry Commission (White 1998) as 265 years, with a probably germination date of around 1745.
- 3) English Oak (*Quercus robur*) at ST 62543 70887 in the middle of field 485 (315). Because of the great age some oaks can achieve, this specimen is regarded as merely "Valuable" according to the Defra guidelines. The Forestry Commission formula calculates the age of this tree as 320 years, with a probable germination date of around 1690.

## Methodology

On Saturday 9th October 2010 a walk through parts of the site was undertaken by Ken Taylor and Steve Pearce, guided by an authorised representative of the current tenant. Care was taken not to disturb livestock and wildlife, not to damage hedges and fences, and to minimise trampling damage to the meadows themselves.

This tour took in several places of interest and also included a survey of one particular hedge. This survey employed a long tape measure to measure the length of a hedge a) to assist in the application of Hooper's Rule to date the hedgerow, and b) to assess its importance according to *The Hedgerow Regulations 1997*.

This visit was augmented on the following day by a further inspection by Doreen Lindegaard (Project Coordinator), Steve Pearce, and Dawn Witherspoon. This activity formed part of the Nature Trail public event staged by the Friends of Victory Park.

## Finds

No portable finds were discovered, but several places of interest were viewed. Nothing found was moved from its original position.

The following list of points of interest includes places identified by creditable sources known to



BCAP. While all of these places lie within the site, some of them are outside the area surveyed by BCAP members in October 2010, and have consequently been marked 'unverified'.

### **Site 1 (unverified)**

The pond (ST 62457110) shown in field 517 (427) still exists as a muddy depression immediately to the west of the stile that gives access from the footpath to the fields.

### **Site 2**

In field 484 (428), at approximately ST 62447102 was a circular depression in the meadow. Its diameter was approximately 3m and its maximum depth was approximately 0.5m. No similar depressions appear to exist nearby.

At the most southerly corner of this field, the eastern hedge meets the northwesterly flowing stream, which was approximately 0.3m wide and 0.04m deep. At this point it was evident that the hedge ascending the slope to the north was set on top of a low bank perhaps 0.25m high.



1942 bomb crater.  
View looking southwards, down the hill.

### Site 3

In the southwest corner of field 502 (314) an indistinct ditch appeared to lie to the east of the bank on which the hedge grows. An imaginary line running parallel with this hedge, at a distance of perhaps 2m east of it, would – when projected to the stream – encounter masonry set into the stream bed (ST 62497097).



Important hedgerow growing on bank  
(viewed from the stream, looking northward up the slope).

Under the water was an area of Pennant stonework resembling a wall, but laid horizontally. The stonework remains mostly intact. The visible extent of this feature was perhaps 0.5m (north – south) and 1.5m (west – east). The vertical depth of the stones was in the order of 0.2m. The rows of stones were roughly parallel with the banks of the stream.

About 0.5m to the northwest of this masonry feature was one end of a Pennant stone wall of at least three courses. The western side disappeared into the bank, and the northern end disappeared into the slope of the hill. Its visible length was approximately 0.5m. While not quite aligned with the horizontal masonry, it was oriented down the hill toward the stream

Looking across the stream, about 1m to the southeast of the masonry feature, was a 'stone'



apparently circular in cross section, with a radius of around 0.3m, and at least 0.5m in length. It was uncertain whether this was Pennant stone or concrete. As the stream is likely to be the boundary between fields, this 'stone' was therefore located in field 485 (315).

#### Site 4

The length of the hedge running north from this point (the middle of which is at approximately ST 624710), and sought to apply a rough and ready version of Hooper's Rule. The hedge was measured as being 69.5m in length. The following twelve woody species were positively identified.

- Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*)
- Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*)
- Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*)
- Elder (*Sambucus nigra*)
- Field Maple (*Acer campestre*)
- Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*)
- Hazel (*Corylus avellana*)
- Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)
- Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*)
- Ivy (*Hedera helix*)
- Oak (*Quercus robur*)
- Rose (*Rosa* species).

For Hooper's Rule it is common to discount certain species such as Bramble and Ivy, leaving ten candidates for inclusion.

The procedure prescribed in The Hedgerows Regulations 1997 was then followed, and in the central 30m stretch of this hedgerow, the following seven woody species listed in Schedule 3 were identified.

- Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*)
- Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*)
- Elder (*Sambucus nigra*)
- Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*)
- Hazel (*Corylus avellana*)
- Oak (*Quercus robur*)
- Rose (*Rosa* species).

There was clear evidence that the hedge was raised on a bank at the southerly end of the relevant section, and it appears also to be on a bank at the northerly end. Patches of dense undergrowth made it impossible to see whether this bank continued along its full length, although there is no reason to suppose it did not.

### **Site 5 (unverified)**

In field 515 (430), the approximate length of the hedge running from the southwest corner to the southeast corner (the middle of which is at approximately ST 626711) is 135m. A rough count of woody species here yielded six species relevant to Hooper's Rule.

### **Site 6 (unverified)**

The 1886 map shows a building at the northeast corner of field 516 (429), up against the hedge (ST 62637111). Dense undergrowth prevented inspection of the ground near the hedge, but no trace of the building was seen on the original site. However, within 5m to the east at the point where informal footpaths cross between fields 516 (429), 515 (430) and 504 (433), the ground appears slightly raised, perhaps through the deposition of demolition rubble to fill a muddy bottleneck at the junction between three fields.

There is a standing reinforced concrete gate post at the junction of fields 515 (430) and 504 (433), with another lying on the ground nearby.

### **Site 7 (unverified)**

At the southwest corner of field 500 (313), where the hedge runs down to the stream, lie the remains of a bridge (ST 62637090). At least three courses of Pennant masonry have been reported in the north bank of the stream, with the topmost slab jutting out over the water. The top slab was about 0.05m thick, and appeared to be broken at the southern end (that overhanging the stream); its parallel sides were approximately aligned with the hedge (i.e. perpendicular to the stream) and the slab was slightly less than 1m wide. No sign of an answering structure was visible on the south bank of the stream in field 485 (315).

However, within about 1m south of the stream there was a Pennant stone wall. This was approximately 1.5m tall topped with coping stones in a cock and hen pattern, and was about 0.4m thick, and 6m in length. At each end the wall increased in thickness by about 0.03m, and height by about 0.2m, each giving a clear indication of being a terminal. Most of the length ran parallel to the stream, but at the western end it curved gently almost 90° southward into field 485 (315).

### **Site 8 (unverified)**

The southeast corner of field 500 (313) also has a Pennant stone wall (ST 62667088) similar in appearance to that just described at Site 7.

## Site 9

The public footpath itself may be a feature of significance. The western end of this path is at ST 62377117, and the east end is at ST 62747093.

It is very nearly straight, and is a few metres north of an apparently ancient hedge. For some of the distance, notably alongside field 484 (428), a broad ditch lies between the hedge and path.

## Interpretation of the site

### Site 1 (unverified)

The pond in field 517 (427), having survived more than 120 years, is likely to be fed by a perennial spring.

### Site 2

The depression (ST 62447102) in field 484 (428) is perhaps 20m west-southwest of the mapped location of the 1942 fallen bomb, but the precision of the map is questionable. This feature appears inexplicable except as the crater left by the explosion of the bomb.

This feature may, at the time of writing, be seen as a dark semicircle on the aerial view of an online mapping website (<http://maps.google.co.uk/?ie=UTF8&ll=51.437004,-2.541486&spn=0.000472,0.001368&t=h&z=20>).

### Site 3

The horizontal masonry in field 502 (314) is likely to be a ford. The relevance of the wall and the round 'stone' is uncertain.

### Site 4

#### *Hooper's Rule*

The length of the hedge (69m) divided by the number of 30m sections in it (i.e.  $69.5 / 30$ ) is 2.3. Dividing the number of woody candidate species (10) by 2.3 produces 4.3.

Therefore the estimated age of this hedgerow is 430 years (plus or minus a century), giving an approximate date range between 1480 and 1680.

This field is located in a block of fields with markedly irregular boundaries. The dating evidence from the hedgerow is consistent with a hypothesis that the field pattern derives directly from a medieval field system that surrounded the centre of Brislington village.

### *The Hedgerow Regulations 1997*

The presence of seven species establishes this as an "important hedgerow" protected under the terms of the Environment Act 1995, section 97. Although brambles made accessing the line of the hedge problematical in places, the clear presence of a bank at the southerly end of the relevant stretch of hedge is suggestive, and it may continue for at least half the length of the section – a feature that would add to the significance of this hedge.

### **Site 5** (unverified)

With the caveat of the very rough species count, we may yet attempt to apply Hooper's Rule to estimate the age of this hedgerow. The calculation yields an age of 130 years (plus or minus a century), giving an approximate date range between 1780 and 1980.

Although this estimate demonstrates the limited use of Hooper's Rule in a small-scale survey, the youngest date is precisely in keeping with the theory that these fields were planted as a consequence of Brislington Common in 1780. The dominant species of this hedge are hawthorn and blackthorn, both of which are favoured for the creation of hedges that require thorny plants as a barrier to animals. This hedgerow is located in a block of fields with markedly regular boundaries that are known to exist in 1846.

### **Site 6** (unverified)

The building in field 516 (429), probably a barn or shed, either fell down or was demolished.

### **Site 7** (unverified)

The stone structure by the stream in field 500 (313) is indicative of a footbridge. The slab may have stretched across the stream in a single span, or it may have butted against others supported by one or more piers.

The path across the stream would continue into field 485 (315), past the curving boundary wall that (if contemporary) would have given an impressive entrance to the land.

### **Site 8 (unverified)**

This boundary wall is likely to be a continuation of the wall at Site 7.

### **Site 9**

The hamlet of Rock lies at the western end of the public footpath, a settlement that is reputed to be of at least medieval date. To the east lies Keynsham (via Ironmould Lane). Before the church of St Luke was founded in Brislington, the local population would have walked to Keynsham to attend church. St Luke's was founded around 1420 although an earlier chapel existed by 1308 (Mitchell et al, 2000). This route is particularly notable for a stretch at the east of Ironmould Lane that is aligned directly with the tower of Keynsham church. Such a route may also have seen service for people attending the medieval market at the town.

The footpath is included on the 1886 Ordnance Survey map.

## **Proposals for future work**

### **Site 1 (unverified)**

Visual inspection of the pond in field 517 (427) might reveal whether it had any artificial structural elements, or is an entirely natural feature.

### **Site 2**

The maps showing the 1942 bomb sites were only viewed online and they are only sections of a larger map. Viewing the original map should reveal which of the two bombing raids recorded on the map, actually produced the crater in field 484 (428).

It may also be possible to locate the sites nearby where other bombs fell. However, it is unlikely any craters remain as those were filled in and or built over – only this site appears to have remained an open field.

### **Site 3**

Excavation could uncover the extent of the ford in field 502 (314), which would indicate the size of the stream and perhaps reveal why a ford was necessary at all (the stream nowadays is small

enough to step across easily). Excavation might also determine the composition and size of the round stone, and perhaps reveal whether and how it was related to the ford. Similarly, excavation could uncover the significance of the stone wall. Dating evidence may also be found.

Visual surveys in adjacent fields might reveal the line of an old track that may have crossed the stream at this ford.

#### **Site 4**

The existence of the indistinct ditch beside the hedge to the west of field 502 (314) could perhaps be determined by detailed observations of other parts of the hedge and the bank upon which it stands.

This hedgerow is not only to be deemed Species Rich by Defra, it has passed the test to become classified as an "important hedgerow" by *The Hedgerow Regulations 1997* and thereby protected by section 97 of the *Environment Act 1995*.

#### **Site 5 (unverified)**

More precise measurements, and surveying along both sides of the hedge to the south of field 515 (430), would significantly increase the accuracy of the estimate of the hedgerow's age.

#### **Site 6 (unverified)**

Visual inspection in or around March, when the undergrowth has died back, may be enough to identify remains of the building at the northeast corner of field 516 (429). Otherwise, geophysical examination or excavation may reveal its nature.

#### **Site 7 (unverified)**

Excavation at the site of the bridge in field 500 (313) could reveal its size, and date.

Visual surveys in adjacent fields might reveal the line of an old track approaching the bridge.

#### **Site 8 (unverified)**

Visual surveys may establish whether this section of wall was part of the same structure as the wall in Site 7.

## Site 9

A detailed survey of the ditch and hedge, may ascertain the relationship between them and the footpath. Desk-based research may also clarify and identify the various purposes the footpath would have served.

## Conclusion

The estimated ages of the hedgerows, although using very limited samples, are in keeping with the observation of a clear distinction between the regular fields to the north of the footpath and the irregular fields to the south. They also support the supposition that the irregular boundaries existed earlier.

The purpose of the ford and bridge are unclear as the stream that currently flows through this valley on the day of the site visit was certainly too small to justify the investment of time and effort that these permanent structures represent. However, it can be assumed that the stream was formerly of such proportions (or perhaps prone to periodic flooding) that the labour was deemed to be warranted.

There is a high likelihood of the existence of archaeological features not encountered or identified by this site visit. In view of the size of the site, a detailed and systematic survey would require considerable resources of time etc.

Further investigation is recommended on all three counts. As the threat to this environment unique in Brislington is real and imminent, preparations for such investigations may warrant consideration as a high priority under the terms of a 'rescue' operation.

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