# BLERT

A Community Archaeology project at the mouth of the Somerset river Axe

# What is BLERT?

The **B**leadon and **L**ympsham **E**nvirons **R**esearch **T**eam is a community archaeology project, founded and steered by Vince Russett as part of North Somerset's Community Archaeology Strategy

It is recording the archaeology and history of the parishes, maritme, moor and Mendip

It is intended to last at least five years

It is collecting all previous work, published and unpublished

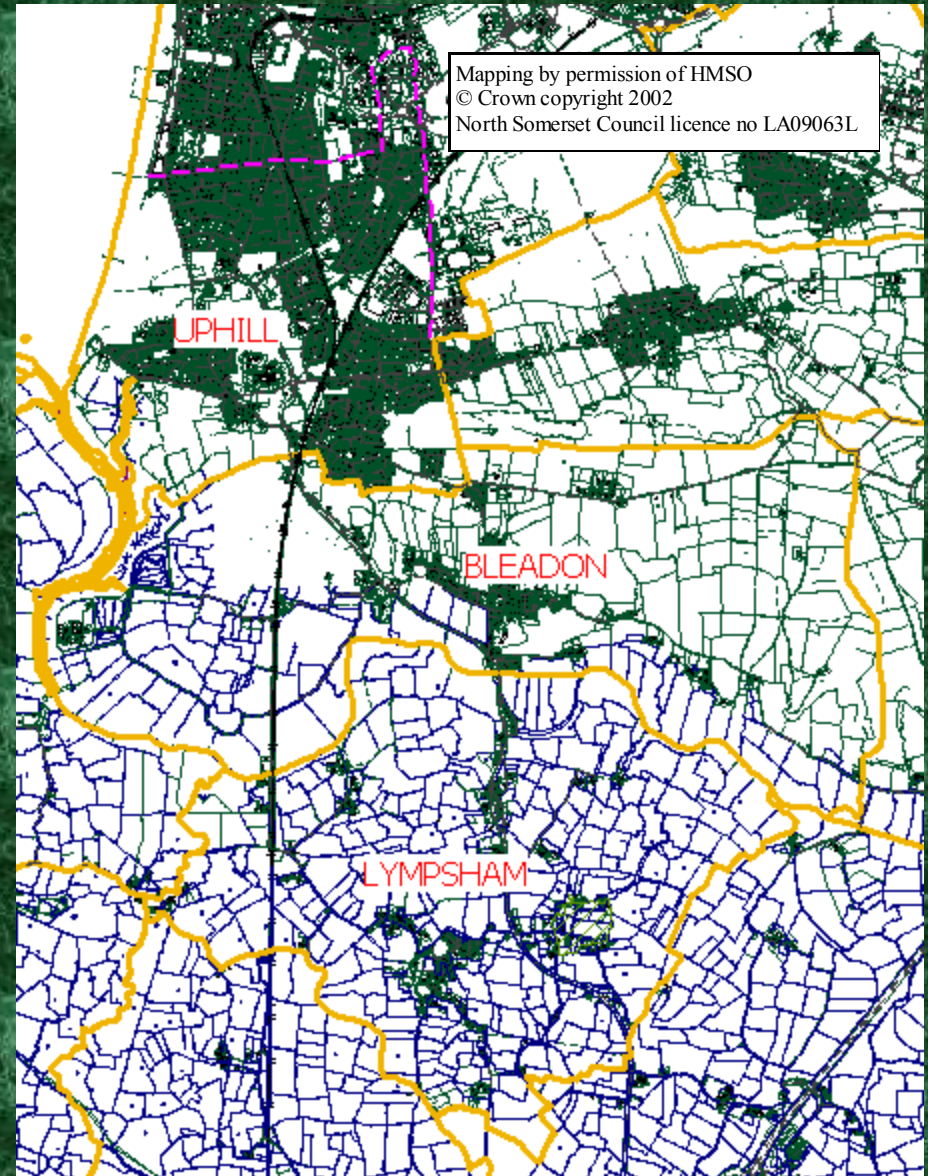It will form an archaeology and history archive within the study area

We also hope to work with all other bodies with an interest in the history and heritage of our study area

# Study area (geographical)

The two parishes

The two ancient parishes of Bleadon and Lympsham contain elements of upland, moor and the pivotal boundary of the Axe.

There is an ancient river port, one of the earliest possessions of Glastonbury Abbey, nationally important iron age field systems, Bleadon man, one of the best-preserved medieval field systems in the West etc



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UPHILL

BLEADON

LYMPSHAM

# A look around

The open plateau of Mendip

Lympsham: the pattern of Glastonbury Abbey's ancient fields shows through the modern landscape

Bleadon man: our ancestor recovered. The scientific studies on his landscape and environment are critical for our understanding of his (and our) age

# Air photo analysis

Air photographs, both oblique (like the view of South Hill, Bleadon opposite) and vertical, show us information about the historic landscape that is otherwise difficult to observe.

The prehistoric field systems on South Hill have now been recorded and surveyed by Dr Richard Wykes: the use of these air photographs was invaluable to him.

# Photographic enhancement



Area enlarged

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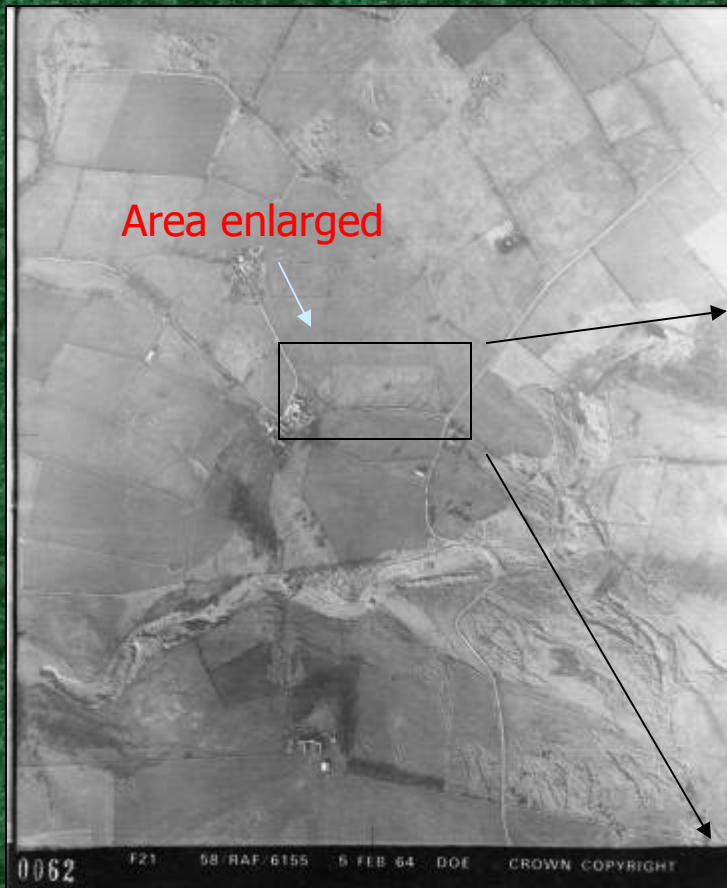
This unpromising 1964 air photograph, from the Charterhouse area, when scanned and digitally processed, reveals much information not immediately obvious on the original

Original scanned at 1200dpi on Epson 2400U scanner and processed with Photoshop 6



D-shaped ?prehistoric enclosure

?Roman water-control features

Linear bank
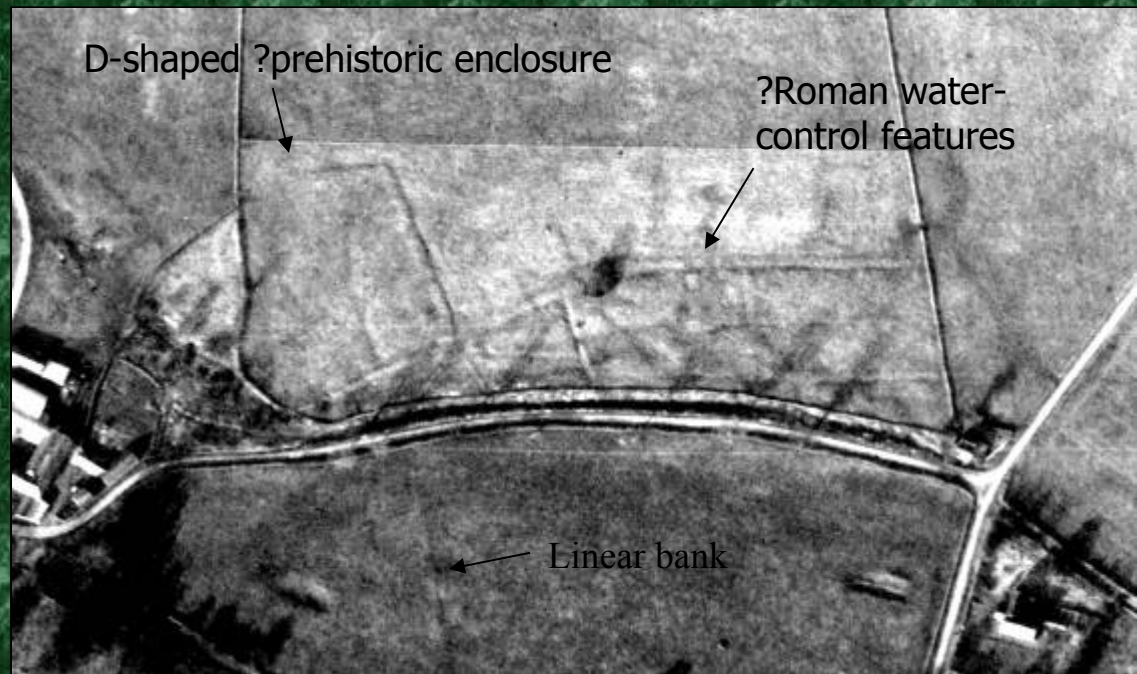
# BLERT historic maps



Two extracts from the 1758 map of Lympsham

A windmill at Batch..

..and a claypit at Eastertown

The BLERT area is well-served with old maps. From the 1658 map of Bleadon, with its basically medieval landscape, through the bucolic sketches of the delightful 1758 map of Lympsham, and the 1803 plan of the same parish, the historic maps of the area show a wealth of now-vanished buildings, roads, landscapes and earthworks.

And that's *before* the 1840s Tithe maps are considered...

# Collecting the antiquarians

It will be necessary to recover information from many sources that were not intended for use as evidence in modern archaeological studies

An Avon County air photograph from a series promoting tourism, 1983 – Roman Road, Bleadon

John Rutter's 1822 engraving of Lympsham Rectory

# Boundary survey



BLERT will survey all the hedges, walls and other boundaries of the area

Botanical recording will give clues to the whereabouts of 'missing woodland'

Recording of banks, ditches, walls and other boundary features will give clues to dates of enclosure and the nature of past landscapes, including transitions from rural to urban

# Field walking

BLERT has GIS mapping available through the Local Authorities, GPS to check on sites and their locations (especially in large fields or on flat lands, where other methods are problematic), and access to computing facilities for photo analysis and archiving, including (one day) a community archaeology workstation within North Somerset Council (next to Vince's desk!)

Less arable is nowadays available for traditional field walking, but BLERT will carry out such survey as is possible.

Fieldwalking, summer 2004

# And finally...

This work needs you!

If you would like to understand your home landscape better, to become part of a group making ground-breaking studies of a fascinating and ancient piece of English countryside, then join BLERT!

No experience is necessary – just enthusiasm.

Just speak to Keith, Bob or myself, and you're in!