

Copse Area, Theale Pit, Field Farm, Mill Lane, Burghfield, Reading

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

NGR SU 6780 7055

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

March 1995

**COPSE AREA, THEALE PIT, FIELD FARM, MILL LANE
BURGHFIELD, READING
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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**

1. SUMMARY

The Oxford Archaeological Unit maintained a watching brief on behalf of ARC Ltd. during the course of topsoil stripping in advance of gravel extraction. The work was carried out in March 1995. No archaeological features were revealed during the stripping. Two thick layers of alluvium overlay the natural gravel to the east of the site. Gravel extraction (by the previous landowner) had taken place on the west side of the site.

2. INTRODUCTION

A wooded copse sited in the north part of Field Farm (Fig. 1) is being stripped in advance of gravel extraction. The copse is situated to the south of Mill Lane and lies on an artificial island (Fig. 2) created by the extraction of gravel. Consent for the work by ARC has been granted under planning application No 144941. The copse lies in an area previously investigated by the Trust for Wessex Archaeology (Butterworth and Lobb, 1992). The OAU evaluated a site north of Mill Lane in 1988 (Moore, 1988).

The Field Farm site contained significant remains. Mesolithic flints, a Neolithic Hearth, a late-Neolithic/early Bronze Age ditch and at least eleven cremations associated with a number of Bronze Age ring ditches were excavated. Later Bronze Age remains found represent peripheral activity at the margins of the adjacent Knight's Farm site. A probable Iron Age enclosure was excavated 120 m to the east of the copse. This enclosure did not extend north of Mill Lane. A single pit of Late Bronze Age date was found on the bank of the floodplain of the River Kennet, which flows to the north of Mill Lane.

3. RESULTS

The topsoil was stripped using a 360° mechanical excavator. The wooded copse was left undisturbed. Gravel had previously been extracted to a depth of 0.60 m from the copse ground level on the west part of the island (area A). The topsoil here was very mixed and contained much recently formed organic matter. No features were visible in the gravel. Several pieces of modern glazed pottery were recovered from the topsoil.

To the south and east of the copse (area B) thick deposits of alluvium had accumulated over the gravel. Layer 6, a mixed grey-brown silty clay including snail shell, sealed the gravel. Layer 6 was overlain by 5, a grey silty clay with brown silt mottles. Layer 5 was sealed by topsoil.

Two sherds of abraded tile were found in the topsoil. Several sherds of late-Bronze Age pottery were recovered from gravel dumps on the topsoil - these sherds are residual and unstratified.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The area of the copse lies within the floodplain of the River Kennet. The alluvial deposits located in area B reflect the seasonal flooding, and accounts for the lack of archaeological activity in the copse area.

5. REFERENCES

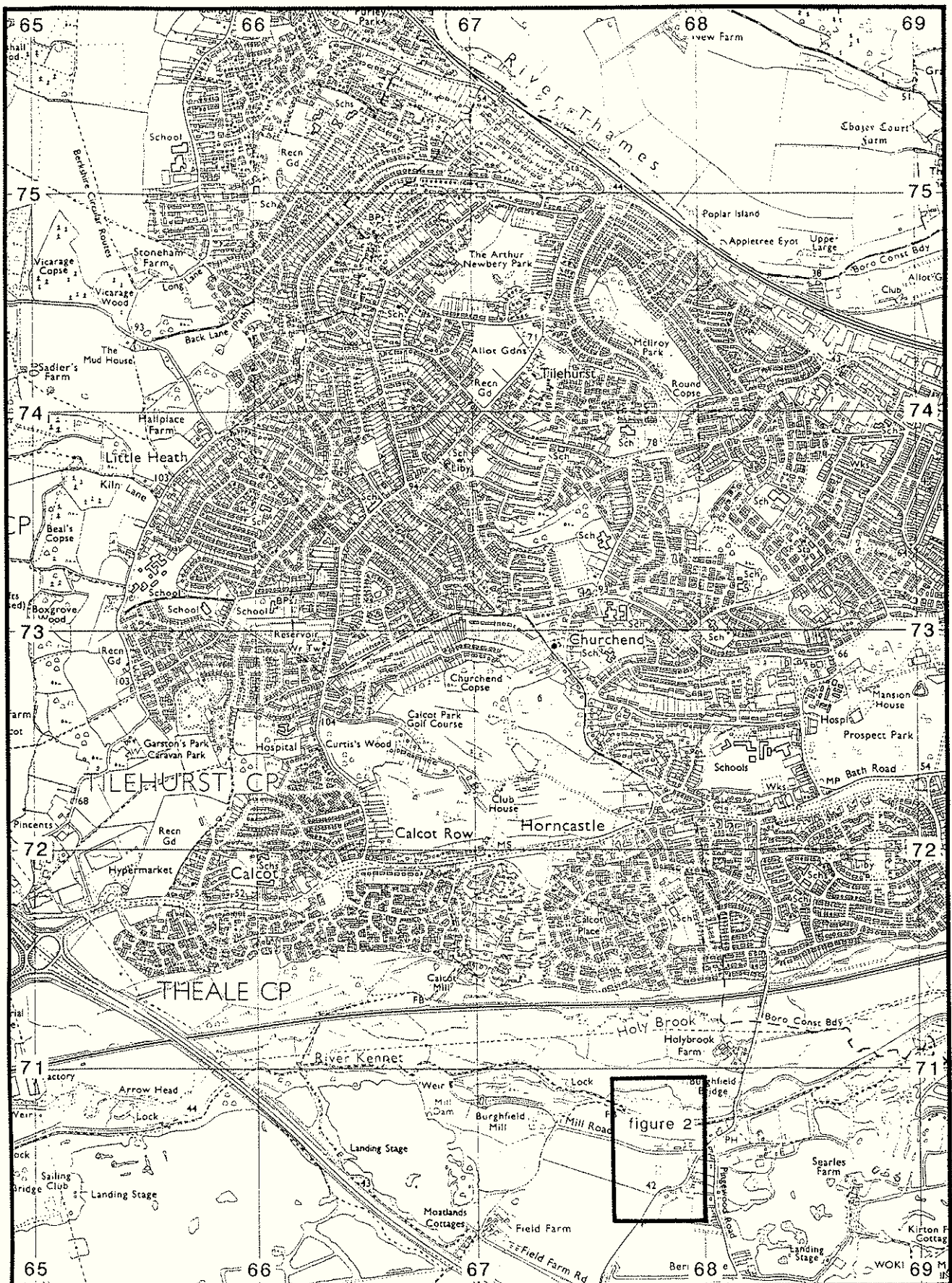
Butterworth, C A, and Lobb S J, 1992 *Excavations in the Burghfield area, Berkshire: Developments in the Bronze Age and Saxon Landscapes*, Wessex Archaeology Report No.1.

Moore, J, Archaeological Evaluation *Mill Road North, Burghfield, Berkshire* (OAU assessment report).

J. Hiller
Oxford Archaeological Unit
March, 1995

Table of context information

CTX	TYPE	DEPTH	COMMENTS
1	Layer	0.41 m	Modern topsoil, Area A
2	Layer	-	Natural gravel, Area A
3	Layer	0.21 m	Organic/vegetation layer beneath present topsoil, Area A
4	Layer	0.43 m	Topsoil, Area B
5	Layer	0.20 m	Layer of alluvial clay beneath topsoil and over layer 6, Area B
6	Layer	0.21 m	Layer of alluvial clay beneath 5 and overlying the gravel, Area B



Based on the Ordnance Survey's 1:25000 map of 1990
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Site location

Figure 1

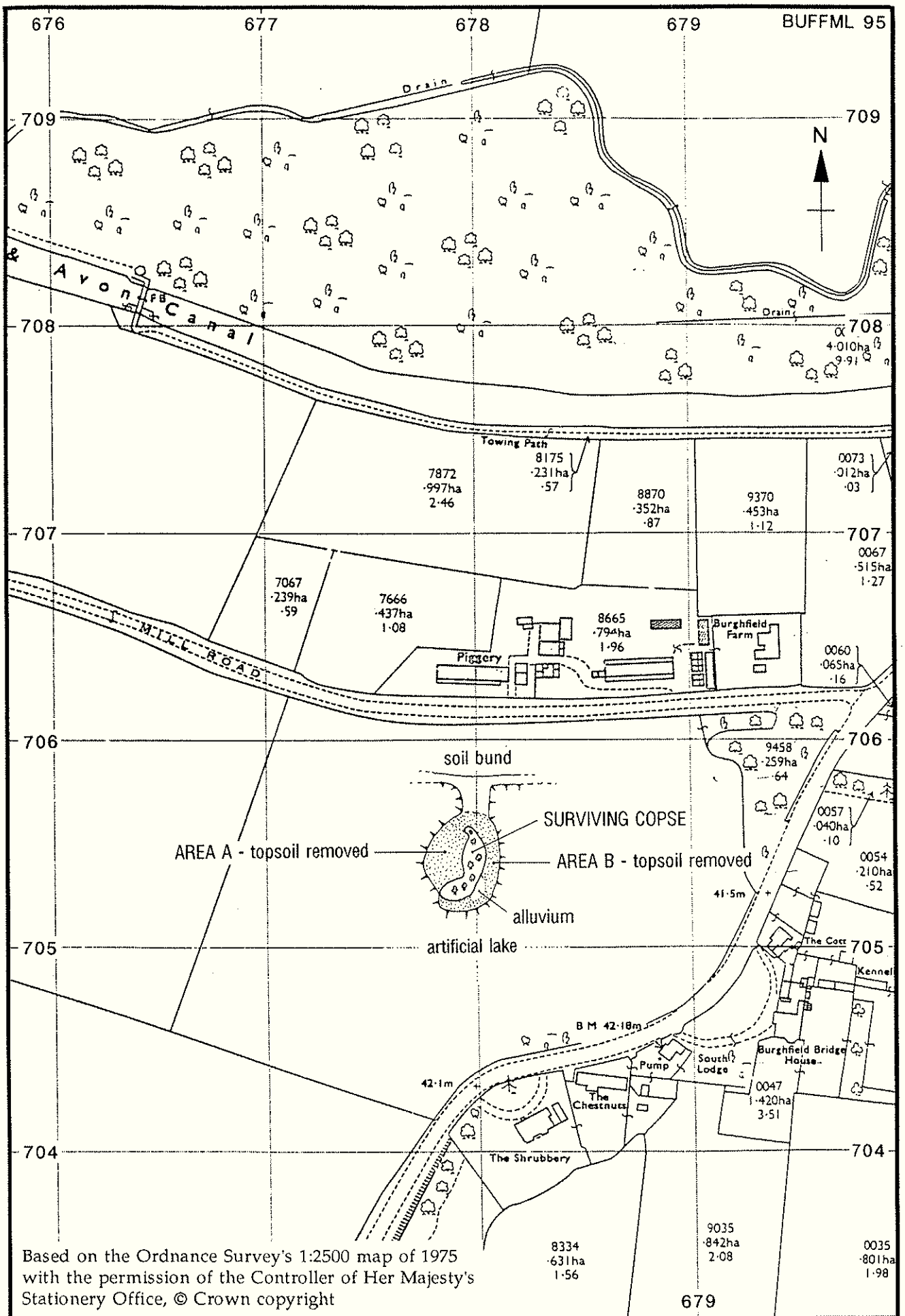


Figure 2

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