

Curtis and Carder Services

**Land at Manor Farm, Hardwick, near Bicester**

NGR SP 5771 2966

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**

Planning Ref. 97/01453/F

Oxford Archaeological Unit

March 1999

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Planning Ref. 97/01453/F

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## **Summary**

*In February 1999 the Oxford Archaeological Unit undertook a watching brief at Manor Farm, Hardwick, near Bicester, within the historic core of the shrunken medieval village of Hardwick. No archaeological features or finds were revealed.*

### **1 Introduction**

The development proposal (planning permission. 97-01453/F) comprised the construction of a new dwelling with garage on land at Manor Farm, Hardwick.

The watching brief was commissioned by Curtis and Carder Services. It was undertaken to a brief set by and a WSI agreed with the County Archaeological Officer.

### **2 Background**

The development site lies on the south side of Hethe Road Hardwick (SP 5771 2966). Located at around 113 metres OD, the geology is calcareous loamy soils overlying limestone. The site was most recently used as a car park, prior to which farm buildings stood on the area.

The site lies within the historic core of the shrunken medieval village of Hardwick. The settlement is mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086 and is probably Saxon in origin. St. Mary's Church, which lies to the south of the development, is 12<sup>th</sup>-century in date. Medieval fishponds lie to the south of the church. Manor Farm, the former Manor House, is located adjacent to the site and dates to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. An archaeological evaluation of the area to the north of the Hethe Road, carried out by Oxford Archaeological Unit in 1992 revealed two earlier buildings. The eastern building contained a mortar floor towards the front and a cobbled surface to the rear. The western building contained a partition wall and a mortar floor. No reliable dating evidence was obtained though two sherds of 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century pottery were recovered.

### **3 Aims**

The aims of the watching brief were to identify any archaeological remains exposed on site during the course of the works, and to record these to established OAU standards (Wilkinson 1992), in order to secure their preservation by record.

### **4 Methodology**

The excavation of the foundation trenches was archaeologically monitored after the site had been cleared and the foundation trench outline had been cut through the concrete car park. All excavation was by JCB fitted with a narrow toothless bucket.

Within the constraints imposed by health and safety considerations the deposits and features exposed were cleaned, inspected and recorded in plan, section and by colour slide and monochrome print photography. Written records were made on proforma sheets. Soil description utilises standard charts for the approximation of percentage of inclusion types in soil deposits.

## **5 Results**

The foundation trenches were dug to an average depth of 1.0m and were 0.75 m wide. The earliest deposit encountered was a silty sand and gravel mixture (3), this was interpreted as a fluvial deposit. Overlying this was the make-up (2) for the concrete car park (1). The combined depth of these deposits is 0.50m.

The only change to this sequence occurred in the south-south-western area of the foundations for the dwelling, where a post-hole was noted (4). The feature was 1.1m wide and 0.90m deep, the fill of which was a natural limestone and topsoil mixture (5) and post-dated by the construction of the car park. The post-hole was interpreted as part of the construction for a barn in the 1950s, but no finds were recovered.

Evidence of modern farm buildings was also noted in the north of the site, where concrete piles were seen in the trenches.

## **6 Environmental results**

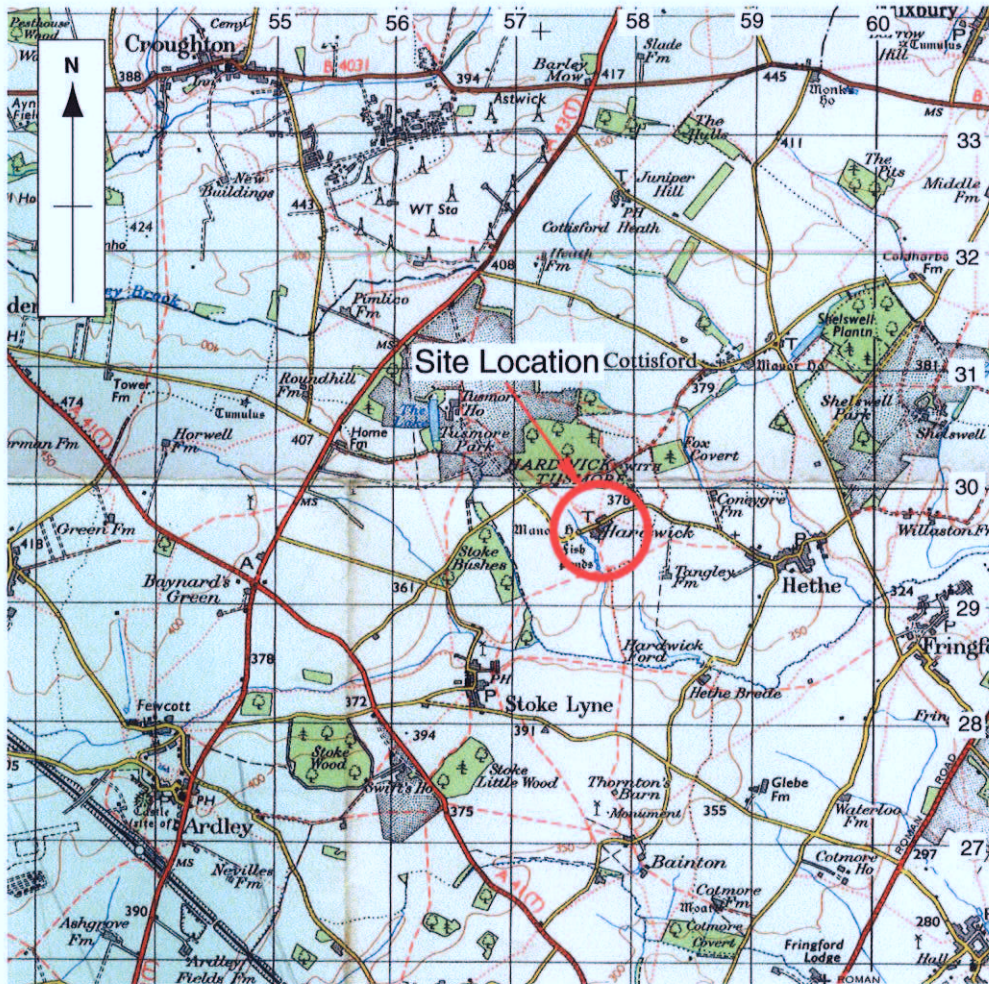
Due to the absence of any significant archaeological features, no environmental soil samples were taken.

## **7 Discussion**

The watching brief produced nothing of a significant archaeological nature, the site appears to have been solely used for farming activities and related buildings connected with the running of Manor Farm.

## **References.**

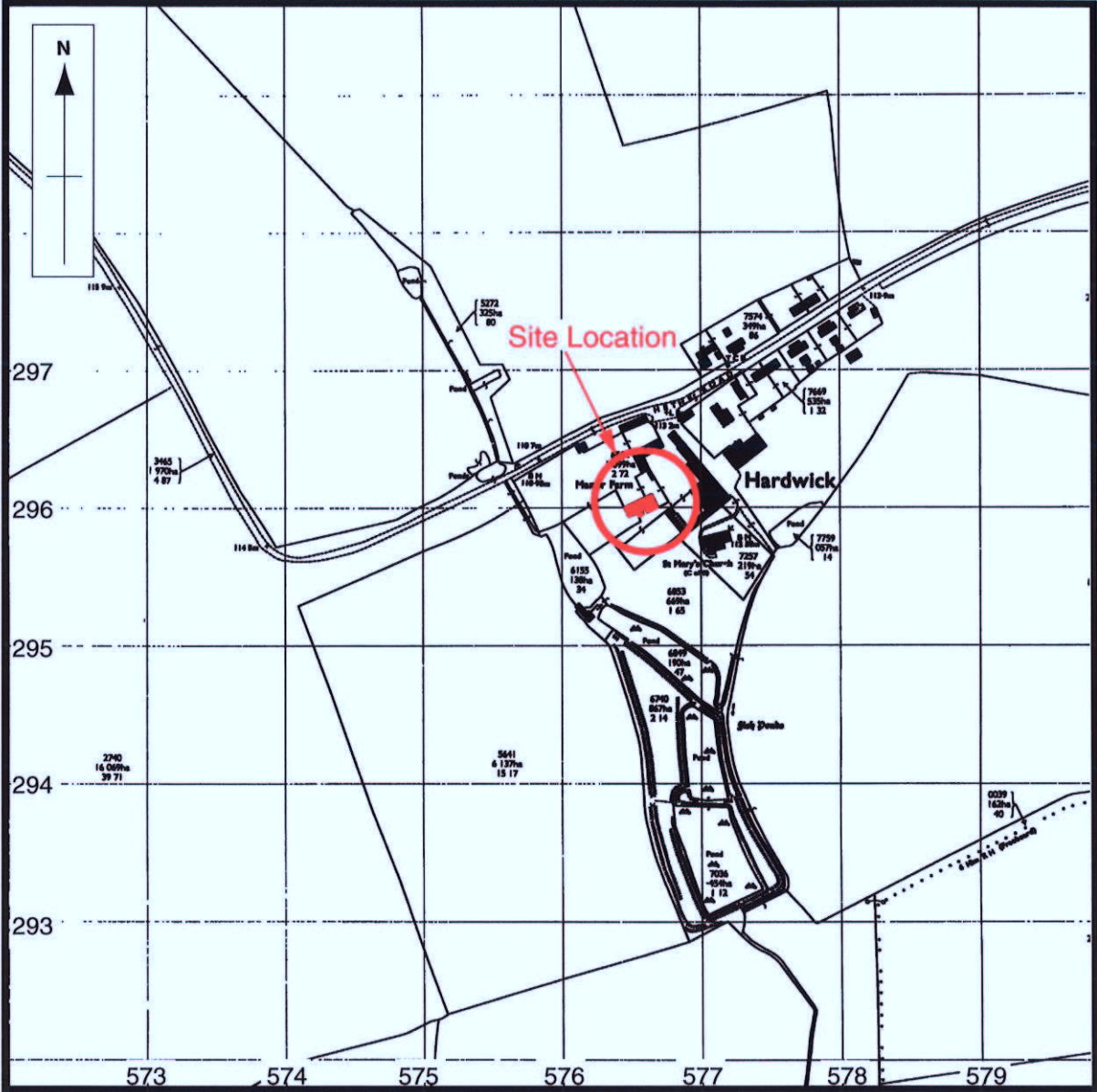
Wilkinson, D (ed) 1992 Oxford Archaeological Unit Field Manual, (First edition, August 1992).



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scale 1: 63360

Figure 1 : Location of Hardwick



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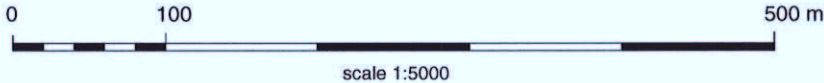


Figure 2 : Site Location

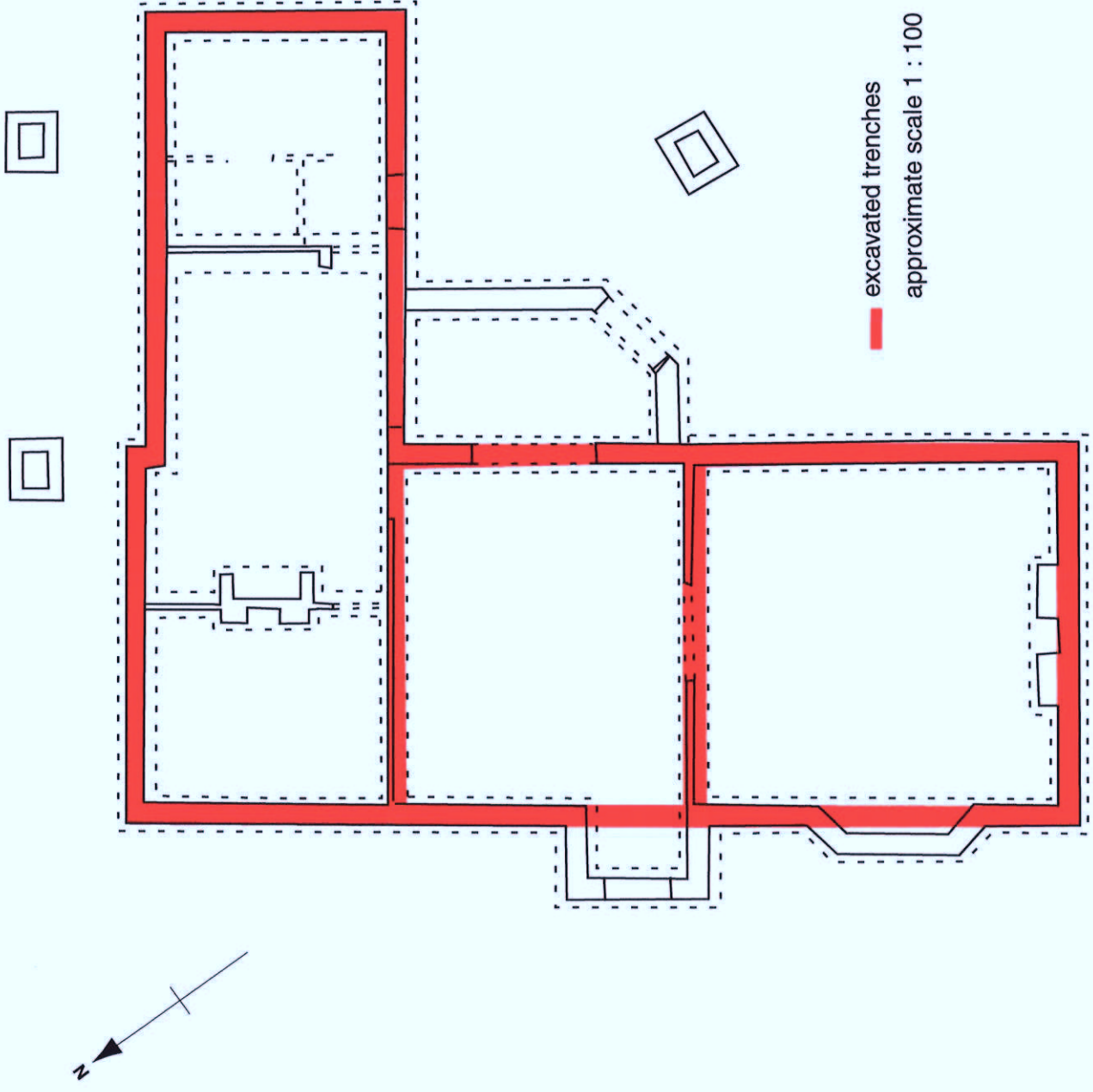


Figure 3 : Foundations of new building



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