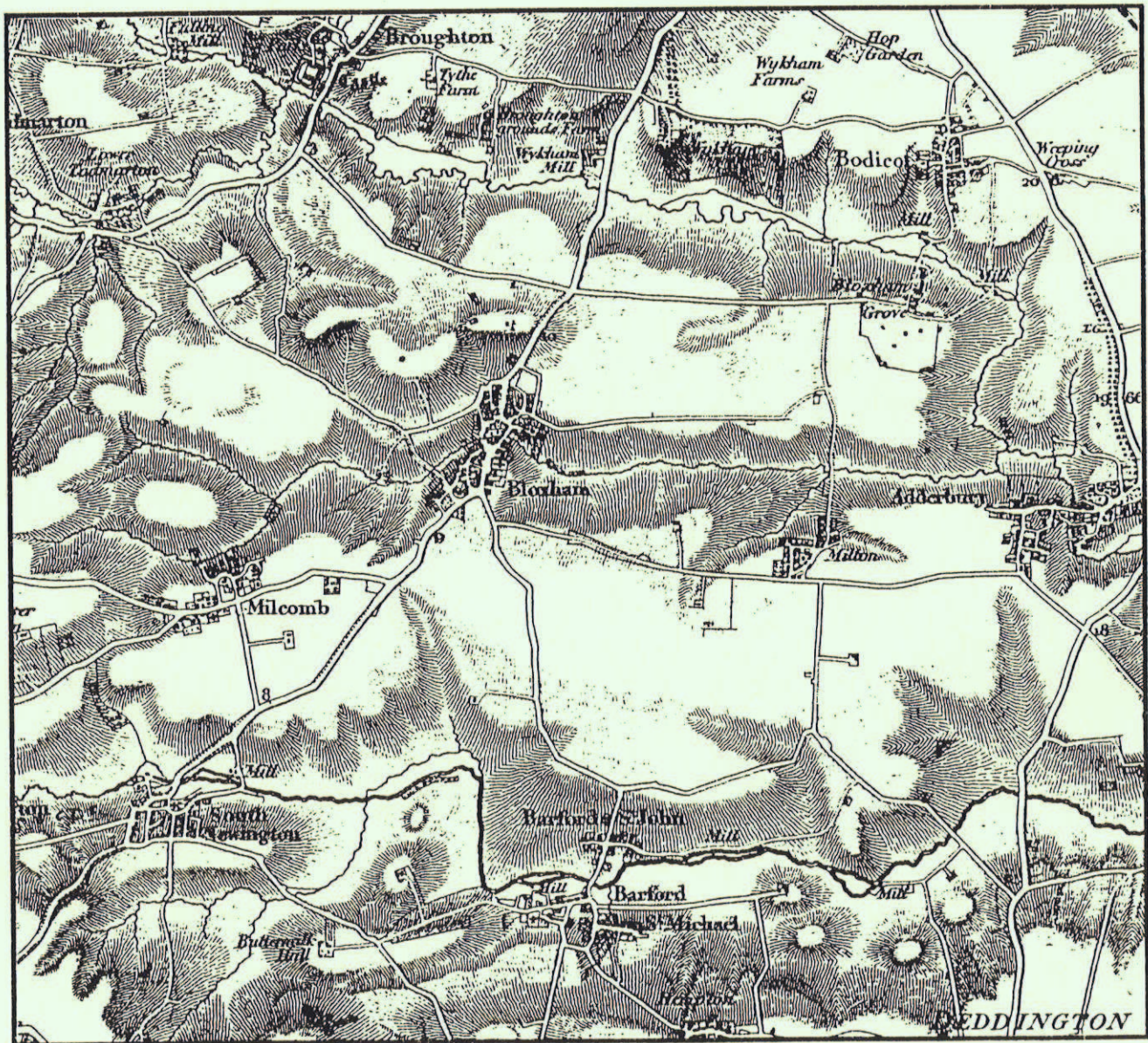


The Old School and Manor Hotel Bloxham, Oxfordshire

NGR SP 42960 35520

Archaeological Watching Brief Report



OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

May 1995

THE OLD SCHOOL AND MANOR HOTEL BLOXHAM

OXFORDSHIRE

WATCHING BRIEF

NGR SP 42960 35520

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SUMMARY

A watching brief carried out in advance of redevelopment located no archaeological features.

INTRODUCTION

In August 1994 a watching brief was undertaken by the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) during the construction of two houses and associated groundworks, (planning application CHN.LBCA62/94).

LOCATION (see figure 1)

The site of the Old School and Manor Hotel is located at the southern end of Bloxham village on the E side of Church Street.

AIMS AND STRATEGY

The aim of the watching brief was to identify any significant archaeological deposits or features on the site located during groundworks.

GEOLOGY

The geology of the site is Middle Liassic Marlstone or Ironstone.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site was considered to have archaeological potential due to its location within the nucleus of the medieval village S of the Church.

There are no known Romano-British remains within the village but several settlements have been located within Bloxham parish; the largest situated c. 800m W of the present village on the Padmarton road. Evidence for occupation from the

1st to 5th centuries includes a cemetery of at least 30 inhumations (Bond 1980; PRN 1712, PRN 4984). At least five other Romano-British sites are known within the parish.

The church of St Mary's was first recorded in 1067 and is noted for its 14th century tower and spire. It occupies an area of high ground within what appears to be an ovoid area defined by Merrivale's Lane and Little Green to the N and by King's Street to the W. The ovoid shape could well be defining an early village boundary (Bond 1980). The area to the SE near to the Old School is not defined by an existing road, but the conjectured shape and topography suggest it is within the medieval village nucleus. Church Street bisects the main village area and is mentioned by name in medieval court rolls.

The mixed National School (PRN 1054), which forms part of the development site, was built in Church Street in 1864.

The remaining area of the site once formed part of Manor Farm which sports a Late Georgian front on a gabled mid 17th century house (PRN 11,780).

A substantial part of the village appears to be of 17th century date and many buildings were remodelled and enlarged in the 18th century.

RESULTS

The groundwork monitored included:

1. Stripping of the existing surface for an access road along the S side of the Old School continuing to the rear of existing buildings.
2. Excavation of pipe trenches for drainage.
3. Stripping of an area for laying block paving
4. Excavation of recently disturbed ground in the NE corner of the site to reconsolidate the ground.

The access road strip was 80 m in length and typically 5 m in width. A trench was dug along the route of the road to take drainage pipes. The 40 m length of road along the S side of the Old School was only seen in isolated areas. The need to maintain access to the site meant that exposed surfaces were quickly disturbed by the movement of plant and machinery. The small areas which were monitored adjacent to the walls of the school suggest there were no archaeological features immediately S of the school and the level exposed approximated to the top of the undisturbed subsoil.

Over most of the stripped road area a reddish brown silt loam soil was noted. It measured 0.10m-0.16m in depth with occasional charcoal flecks. The layer appeared

fairly 'clean' and produced no finds.

The road strip just E of the Old School exposed a 12 m length of undisturbed natural subsoil, consisting of reddish brown silt and fragments of marlstone. The typical reduced level of the site was 0.36 m below the previous ground level. Over most of the remaining area this exposed a stone rubble makeup layer providing a hardcore base for the previous surface of compacted stone chippings.

A pipe trench running approximately NNE provided a good cross-section through the site, including a 20 m length through an area obscured in plan by rubble. The trench was again cut into the natural subsoil and no archaeological deposits were seen.

Observation of the first 5 m of a pipe trench running E from Church Street revealed bedrock and showed no earlier deposits to have survived below the previous surface of compacted chippings.

The NW corner of the site consisted of an area of disturbed ground reported by the contractors to be the site of an aborted underground disco! This had originally been excavated to a depth in excess of 3 m and then backfilled. It was re-excavated in order to be compacted, prior to any further construction. Due to the depth of the disturbance no archaeological features are likely to have survived in this area so it was not examined any further.

CONSIDERATION OF THE RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Sequences exposed by groundwork disturbance provided a reasonable sample of the area under development and it is likely that any significant remains would have been revealed even though badly truncated by later activity.

No archaeological features were seen during groundwork disturbance and no residual finds were recovered from any of the later layers.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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May 1995

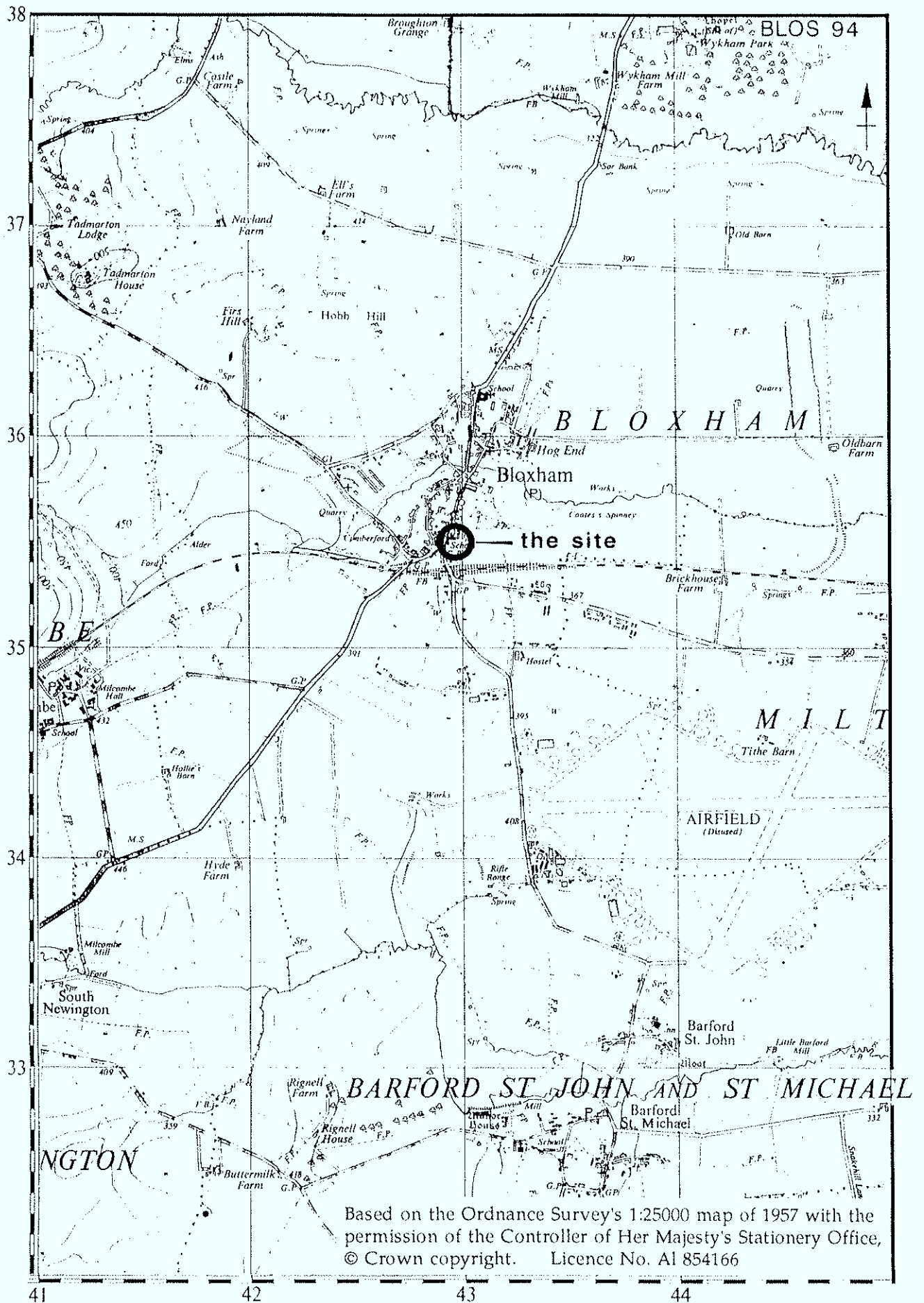


figure 1



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