

PLOT ADJACENT TO 4 HETHE ROAD, HARDWICK, OXON

1992Introduction (Fig. 1)

Hardwick is situated in the north-east of the county, lying on Great Oolitic limestone overlain by flint gravel. Minor roads connect Hardwick with Stoke Lyne and the Oxford-Brackley Road, and with Hethe and the Bicester-Anyho Road. The name Hardwick probably derives from Old English herdwick (sheep or possibly cattle farm, or dwelling place for flocks and herds), suggesting that a settlement formed here because the drift gravel of the uplands provided fine pasture. As the church at Hardwick was a chapelry of Stoke Lyne in the mid 12th century, it is possible that the herdwick belonged to a Saxon estate there.¹

Hardwick was one of the least populous places in Ploughley Hundred. The Compton Census of 1676 records 23 adults, while subsequent documents record 2 houses and 3 cottages in 1738, a farmhouse and 6 cottages in 1759, 11 houses in 1771, and a peak year in 1821 of 17 houses and 98 inhabitants.² The Manor Farm (formerly the manor house) and the church stand on relatively high ground which falls away to a stream on the west. Today the farm buildings lie mainly in the village, on either side of the Hethe Road.

Consideration was given to the development of a plot of land adjacent to 4 Hethe Road (SP 57762974). The area (Fig. 1) lies immediately south of earthworks of the shrunken medieval village (S.M.V.) of Hardwick,³ approximately 160 m. north of the church. In early 1992, Oxford Archaeological Unit undertook an evaluation to ascertain whether remains of the S.M.V. were present on the site proposed for development. Five trenches were excavated by JCB with subsequent hand-cleaning of deposits. This revealed remarkably well-preserved remains of two buildings fronting onto Hethe Road (Fig. 2). No excavation of the remains was undertaken, other than cleaning.

Results (Fig. 2)

The eastern building contained a pale yellow/white mortar floor towards the front of the buildings (Trench 1, 3) overlying a make-up layer of sandy gravel (Trench 1, 4). A cobbled floor (Trench 3, 6) lay in the rear of the building. The rear wall of the building (Trench 3, 4) was constructed of limestone blocks bonded with a yellow/white mortar, and a doorway was apparent through this wall.

The western building did not extend as far back from the road as the eastern building. It contained a partition wall (Trench 1, 5), with a mortar floor (Trench 1, 6) in the 'front room'. The wall constructions were similar to those of the eastern building.

To the rear of the buildings was a cobbled yard, with neatly-arranged pitched stone immediately adjacent to the buildings, separated from a slightly less neat arrangement (Trench 2, 3 and Trench 3, 5) by a narrow, open drain. This in turn gave way to rough cobbling (Trench 3, 7 and Trench 5, 3) extending c. 8 m. from the rear of the eastern building to a wall (Trench 5, 2).

The make-up layer to the mortar floor in the eastern building contained a sherd of 11th- to 12th-century pottery, although due to the limited investigation this dating cannot be relied on, since the sherd may well be residual. The only other dating evidence was a second sherd of 11th- to 12th-century pottery from a layer overlying the natural gravel to the rear of the enclosed cobbled yard in Trench 5.

Since the well-preserved remains lay only c. 0.2 m. below the present ground level, the development was not carried out.

JOHN MOORE

Plot adjacent to 4 Hethe Road, Hardwick, Oxon
by John Moore

Footnotes

1. Victoria History of the County of Oxford, vi, 168.
2. Ibid.
3. Oxon. County Sites and Monuments Record, P.R.N. 971.

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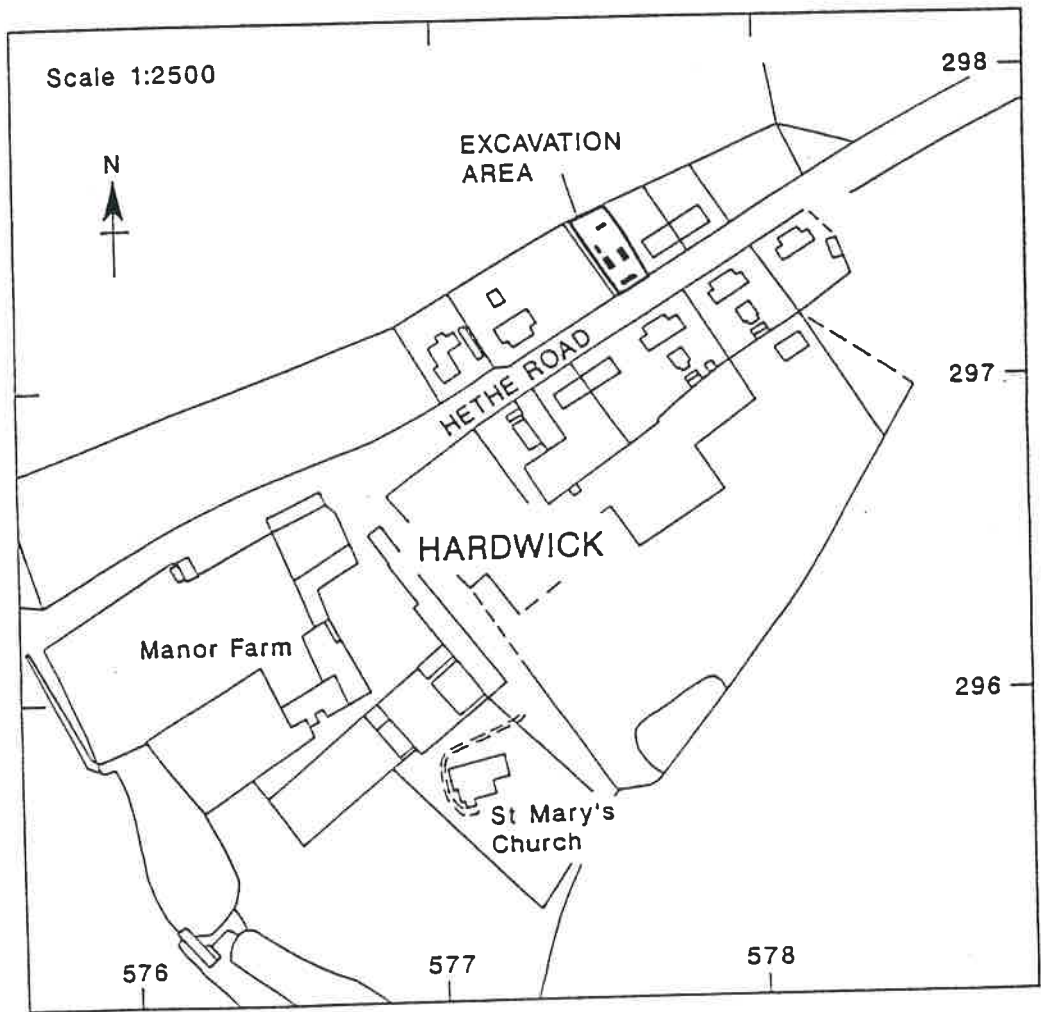
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Figure captions

Fig. 1 Hardwick: location of the evaluation.

Fig. 2 Plan of the major features found in Trenches 1, 2, 3
and 5.

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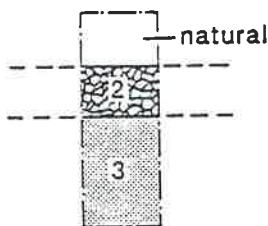


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excavated section

Trench 4 4m to north

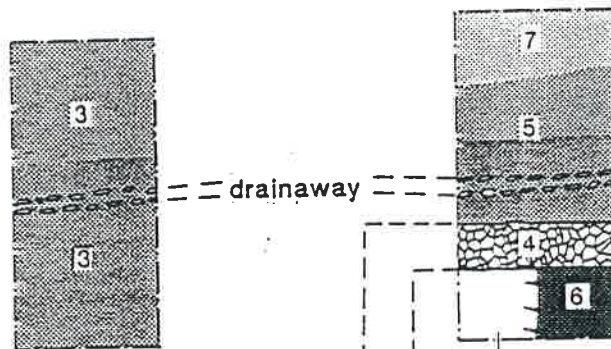


TRENCH 5

- Rough cobbling
- Pitched stone cobbles
- Cobbled floor
- Mortar floor
- Wall

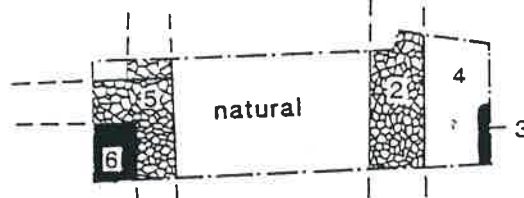


FOOTPATH



TRENCH 2

TRENCH 3



TRENCH 1

edge of driveway

WALL

Fig 2.