

Banbury Road, Stratford on Avon

NGR SP 216 539

Archaeological Watching Brief Report



Oxford Archaeological Unit

October 1996

**Milestone Meadow,
Banbury Road, Stratford-Upon-Avon
NGR SP 216539**

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Summary

A Watching Brief was carried out at the site of a new housing development at Milestone Meadows, adjacent to Banbury Road, Stratford-upon-Avon, in August 1996. No significant archaeological features or deposits were noted.

1 Introduction

The site covers c 1.5 ha adjacent to a known Roman road on the south-eastern outskirts of Stratford-upon-Avon (Fig. 1), and is centred at National Grid Reference SP 216539. While located in an area of general archaeological interest there were no specific records of archaeological sites or finds in the immediate vicinity of the site (see section 3 below). Planning permission (application number S95/1385) for housing development was granted to Beazer Homes with the condition that an archaeological watching brief be carried out on the site, because of the possibility that archaeological deposits might be encountered in this area. A specification for the watching brief was prepared by the Archaeology Section of Warwick Museum and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) for the work was subsequently drawn up by the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU). After an abortive start in June the archaeological phase of the project was carried out on behalf of Beazer Homes in August 1996. The site code was STOABR96 and the project archive will be deposited with the Warwickshire Museum.

2 Geological and Topographical background

The underlying geology of the site is a combination of Mercia Mudstone and 4th Terrace river gravels. The site is located on ground which rises gently towards Waterloo Hill to the south-east. At the time of commencement of building works the land had been left vacant for some time and earlier land use is uncertain. Adjacent plots to the south-east, north-west and south-west contained residential housing, whilst the land to the immediate north-east is in arable use.

3 Archaeological background

The site is located adjacent to a Roman road (Warwickshire Sites and Monuments Record PRN No. WA 4756), but there is no indication of related activity in the area. The nearest settlement recorded within the County Sites and Monuments record is SMR

PRN 1009 at National Grid Reference SP 222538, approximately 0.5 km to the east-south-east. This is an undated cropmark site of both subrectangular and irregular enclosures with other linear features which is thought likely to date to the Iron Age or Romano-British period. Further undated cropmark complexes including enclosure elements lie about 1 km distant to north-east and south-east (PRNs 6228 and 4943 respectively). At Orchard Hill Farm, c 1.5 km to the south-west, another cropmark complex includes a possible early Roman fort site. The principal Roman settlement in the area was at Tiddington, 1.5 km north of the present site but lying on a minor road running up the Avon valley rather than on the major road (from Ettington to Alcester) adjacent to the present site. These two roads would have met near the Roman crossing point of the river Avon, which must have been close to the site of the medieval Clopton Bridge.

Near this last point, at Alveston Manor, just over 1 km north-west of the present site, was an important early Anglo-Saxon cemetery, perhaps relating to a contemporary settlement which succeeded the Roman site at Tiddington.

4 Methodology

Archaeological background material (see above) was examined in the County Sites and Monuments Record in Warwick. The site itself was visited on a number of occasions to monitor topsoil stripping and excavation of the main service trenches. This work was done using JCB and 360° tracked excavators. A roughly 56 m length of the principal service trench running from the entrance of the site was observed. The service trenches were dug in lengths over 2 m in depth and were quickly shored after excavation, but there was nevertheless sufficient time to note the underlying geology within these trenches and to observe archaeological features had these been present. A further series of geological test pits, excavated at intervals along the continuation of the proposed line of these main service trenches (see Fig. 2 for layout plan), was also examined. The stripping of topsoil for the construction of access roads was observed. Substantial areas of the site, particularly on the north-west side, were also stripped prior to the excavation of house foundations; these too were examined for archaeological features. Spoilheaps were checked for artefacts. Excavation and recording of features was in accordance with the OAU's Field Manual (Wilkinson 1992).

5 Archaeological Results

All trench sections and test-pits examined within the watching brief area showed a consistent geology. The lowest deposit was a brown clay loam (6) with a very uneven upper surface which undulated across the various exposed sections. This lay beneath a pale orange-brown sandy silt (5), in turn sealed by a gravelly sandy loam (2) of similar colour. These lower layers were archaeologically clean with no finds or any apparent anthropomorphic disturbance.

Only one feature of archaeological note was found. This was a shallow sub-rectangular pit [4] measuring 2.45 m long x 0.68 m wide x 0.2 m deep (Fig. 3). The orientation of the feature was north-south; at its northern end it became very poorly defined, so the

recorded length is not absolutely certain. Where sectioned, the feature had vertical sides rounding to meet a slightly irregular but otherwise flat base. Finds recovered from the brown clay loam fill (3) of this feature consisted of one small fragment of slate and a small sherd of modern glazed pottery, indicating that the pit is of modern origin.

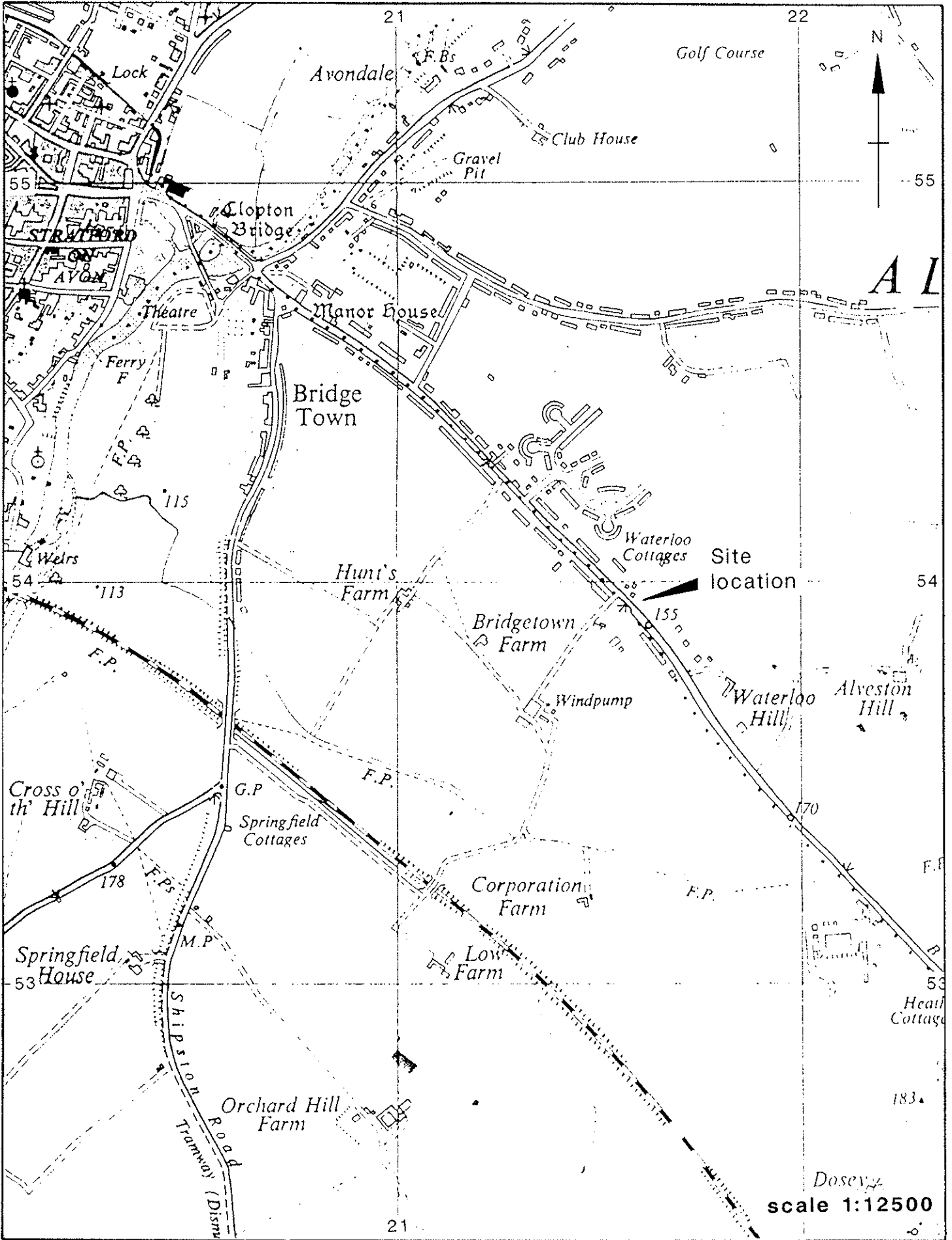
The topsoil (1) was a friable light reddish-brown loam up to 0.25 m deep. This extended over the whole site.

Over the whole of the examined area (see Fig. 2) the quantity of finds observed was very low, with only very occasional small to very small slate fragments and small to medium sized sherds of modern pottery evident within the present topsoil or at the interface with natural sandy gravels below. A certain amount of generalized charcoal flecking was noted beneath the present topsoil at the central north-west edge of the site. This was also presumed to be of recent origin.

6 Conclusions

A significant sample area of the whole development site was examined. Within the examined area the one archaeological feature found was apparently of modern origin as indicated by the material recovered from its fill. There was a generalized distribution of small broken slate and modern pottery fragments within the topsoil, and occasional charcoal mottling at the interface of topsoil and subsoil towards the central north-western part of the site suggests a possible modern disturbance there. The site appears not to have been the location of any detectable ancient activity.

Bryan Matthews
Oxford Archaeological Unit
October 1996



SP 25
 Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey's 1:25,000 map with
 the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery
 Office,
 © Crown copyright. Licence No. AL 854166

Figure 1

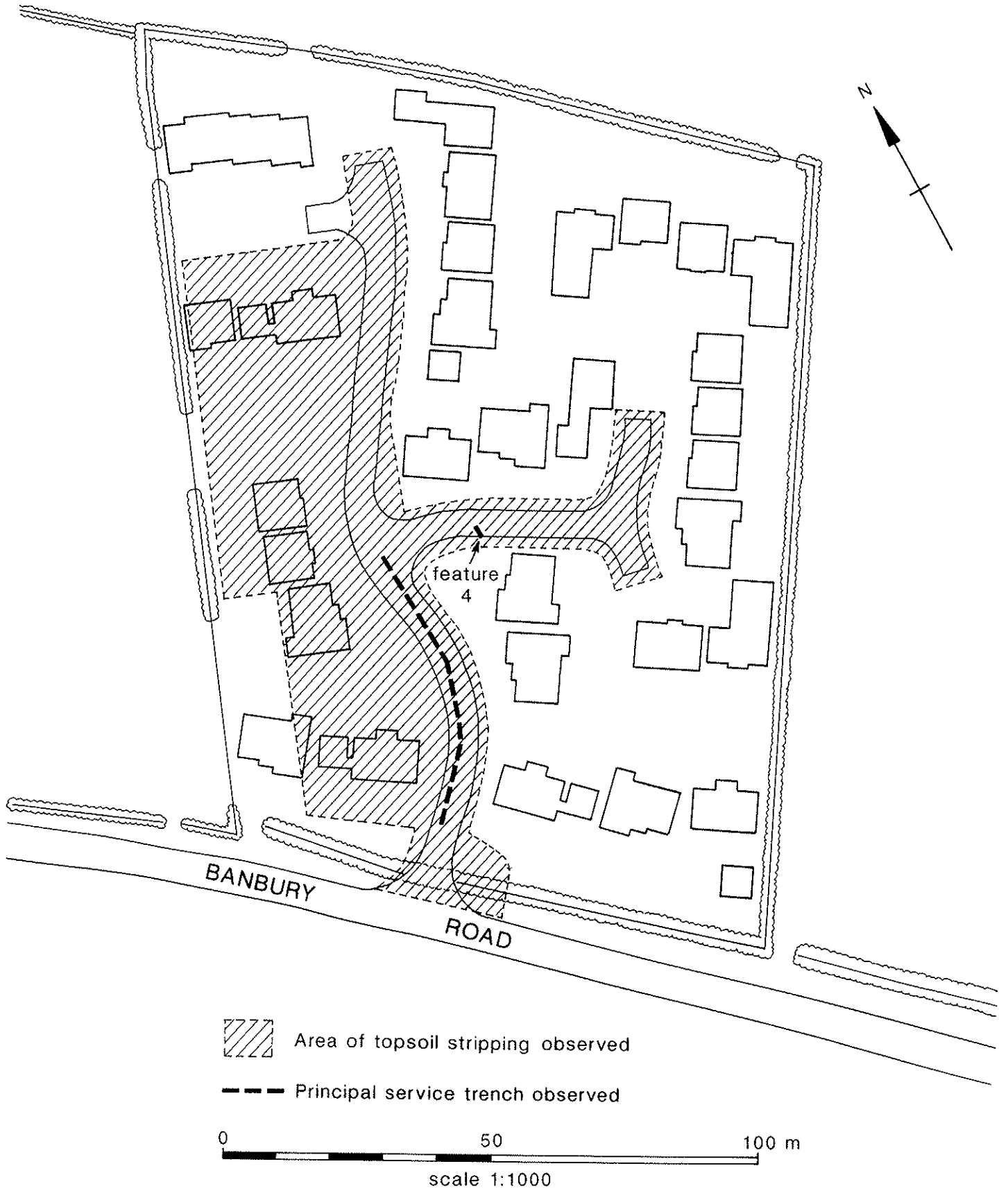
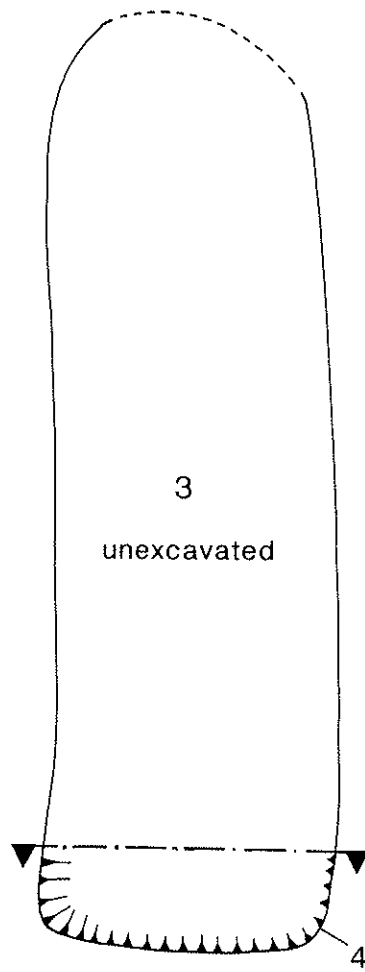


Figure 2

Plan of
feature 4



section

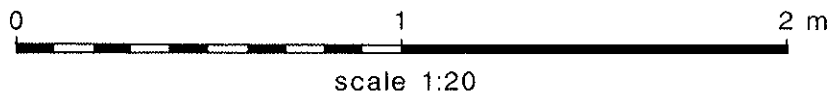
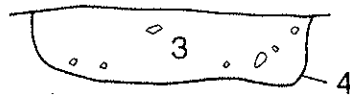


Figure 3



OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES
Telephone: 01865 243888 Fax: 01865 793496



Director: David Miles B.A., F.S.A., M.I.F.A.
Oxford Archaeological Unit Limited. Registered Office: Janus House, Osney Mead
Registered Charity Number: 285627 Private Limited Company Number: 1618597