

**Andy Hopkins and Joc Potter**

**The Lawn, Market Street, Charlbury, Oxfordshire**

*NGR SP 3560 1957*

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**

**Planning Ref. No. 00/0274**

**Oxford Archaeological Unit**

**January 2001**

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The Lawn, Market Street, Charlbury, Oxfordshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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Oxford Archaeological Unit

January 2001

**Land Adjacent to Charlbury Garage, Market Street, Charlbury**  
**Archaeological Watching Brief**  
**NGR SP 3560 1957**

## **Summary**

*In January 2001, Oxford Archaeological Unit undertook a watching brief at "The Lawn", Market Street in Charlbury, Oxfordshire (Fig. 1). No significant archaeological features or deposits were observed.*

## **Introduction**

Permission had been granted by West Oxfordshire District Council for the construction of a single dwelling, with double garage, car parking space and a workshop/office (Planning Ref. 0010274). Due to the potential disturbance of below ground archaeological deposits a condition for an archaeological watching brief was attached to the permission, in line with PPG16 and local plan policy. The development, site is located to the rear of the garage on the west side of Market Street (Fig. 2), between Dyers Hill (B4437) and The Alley, within the centre of the historic village of Charlbury (NGR SP 3560 1957). The site lies at approximately c102m OD. Current land use is for car parking and a garden/former orchard. The geology is fine loam overlying clay shale. Charlbury is located on the eastern valley slope of the River Evenlode on Great Oolite, with bands of gravel, alluvium and other strata occurring along the Evenlode Valley. The settlement lies at the centre of a minor road network linking it to Burford, Woodstock and Chipping Norton.

## **Background**

The development site is located in an area of archaeological potential. Prehistoric barrows and earthworks are known in the surrounding area, including a section of Grim's Ditch located to the west of the River Evenlode. The site of a Romano-British Farm has been excavated at Lee's Rest, to the east of the town. Archaeological finds recorded from the town itself include a group of undated skeletons from north of St Mary the Virgin churchyard and a Roman brooch, reputedly gold, also found in the vicinity of the church.

The place name 'Charlbury' means the *burh* of Ceorl, possibly suggesting the presence of a significant Anglo-Saxon settlement on the site. There is also some documentary evidence for an earlier Anglo Saxon Minster to the south of the site, possibly on the site of the present church of St Mary the Virgin (OAU, 1995). This may have formed the focus of the Anglo Saxon and early medieval settlement that evolved into modern Charlbury. There are two 7th century Saxon cemeteries in the north-west of the parish. The full extent of the early settlement is not known and as such the potential for the disturbance of below ground archaeological features was deemed sufficient to warrant a watching brief by the County Archaeological Service.

## **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.

## **Methodology**

The watching brief was undertaken by means of separate inspection visits; all digging was undertaken by mechanical excavator.

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

## **Results**

The topsoil was reduced over the whole development area but this did not impact below the interface between the topsoil and the underlying clay shale. The strip foundations themselves revealed approximately 0.3m of topsoil overlying c0.1m of a mixed deposit consisting of topsoil and re-deposited clay shale. This was in turn underlain by the natural clay shale.

The strip foundations for the new building were then excavated. No archaeological features were observed during the groundwork, other than a potential 19th century / modern pit in the south-east corner of the site, which contained brick rubble, sherds of flower pot, occasional bone, charcoal, glass and metal. This was interpreted as garden waste and no finds were retained.

## **Finds**

No finds were retained as no significant archaeological deposits were observed.

## **Discussion**

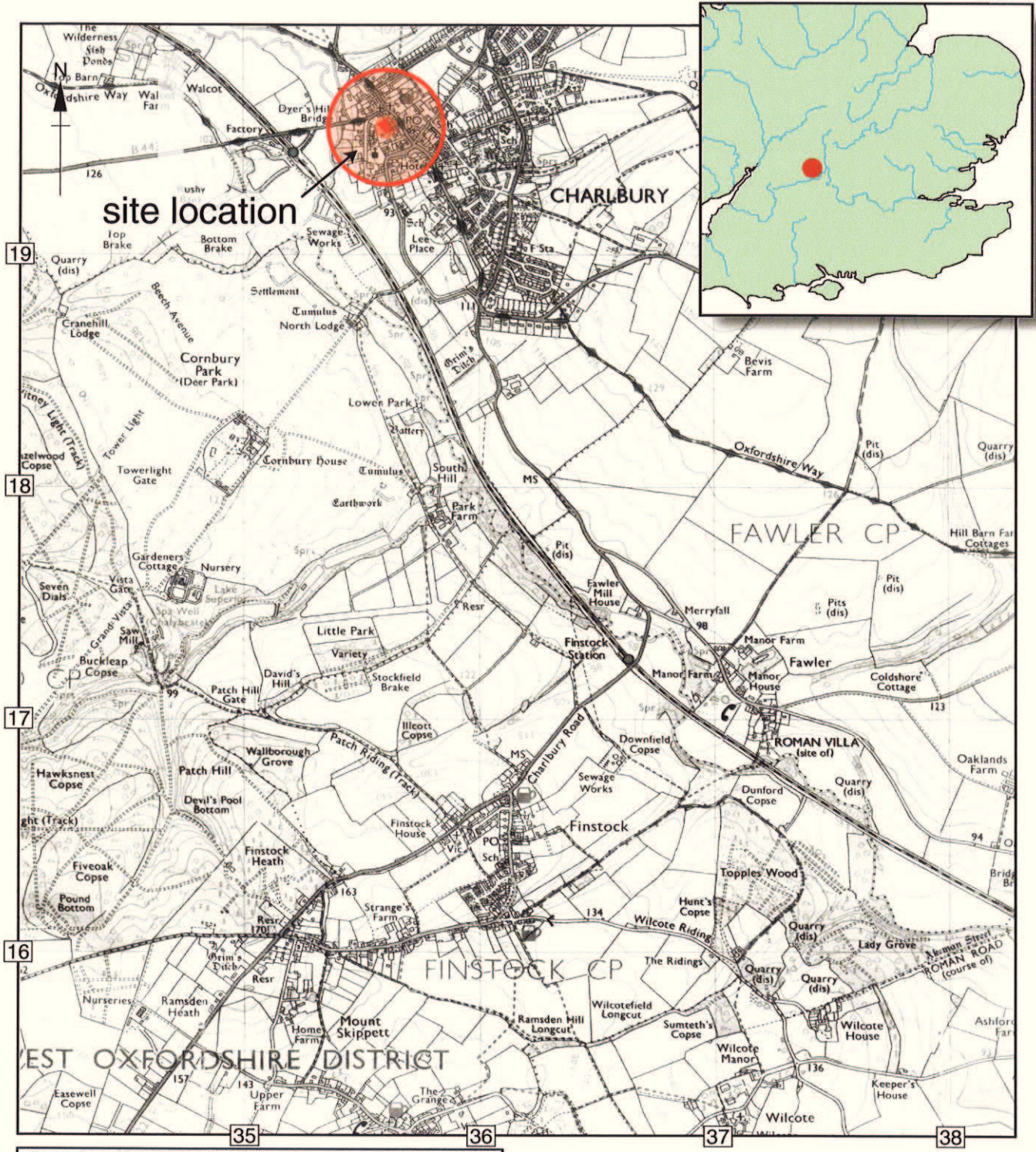
Despite the archaeological potential of the site - given its proximity to the historic core of Charlbury - no significant archaeological deposits were recorded during the watching brief. However, the limited impact of the groundworks negated a comprehensive study of the site, and it is possible that any future development may identify archaeology within in or near the development site.

## References.

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

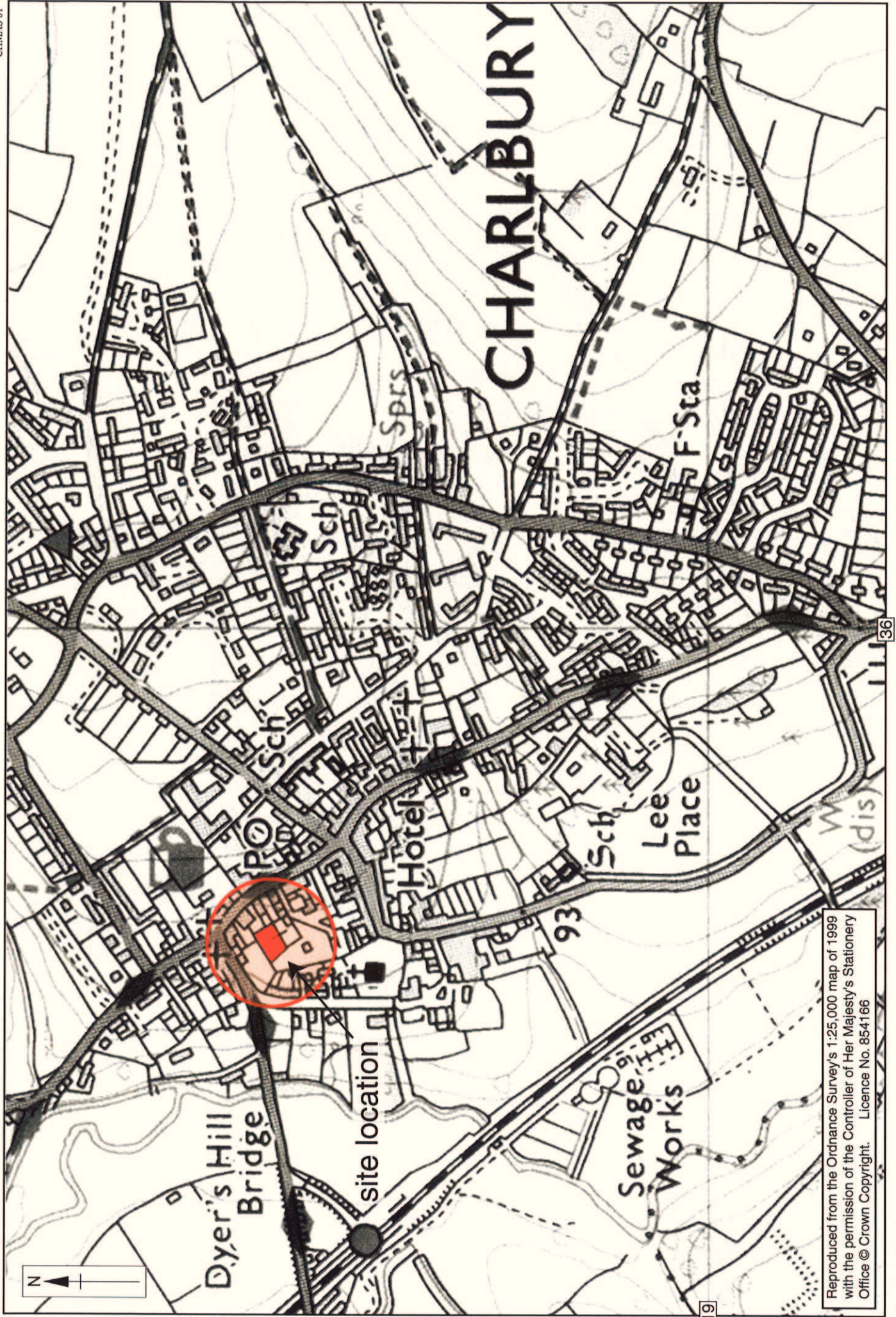
Hiller, J *Excavations at the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Charlbury, Oxfordshire*, OAU, 1995.

Blair J, 1994 *Anglo-Saxon Oxfordshire*. Alan Sutton Publishing.



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Figure 1: Site location



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