

Tudor Hall School  
Wykham Park, Banbury, Oxon

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

NGR SP 439 379

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

July 1995

**TUDOR HALL SCHOOL, WYKHAM PARK, BANBURY, OXON**  
**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**  
**NGR SP 439 379**

## **1. SUMMARY**

Despite the close proximity of this development to the recorded location of Roman and medieval remains, no significant archaeological remains were found during the recent excavations.

## **2. INTRODUCTION**

The Oxford Archaeological Unit maintained a watching brief during construction work in the grounds of Tudor Hall school in July 1995. The site was visited on three occasions by OAU personnel. A building extension (to a recently constructed range of buildings) covering an area of 160 sq.metres necessitated the excavation of foundation trenches by machine to a depth of 1 m.

The watching brief carried out as a condition of the planning permission, owing to the presence of known archaeological sites both within the grounds of, and outside the limits of Wykham Park. The park is situated at about 122 m O.D., on the southern slope of an E-W ridge of middle lias clay and marlstone. The development site slopes gently from north to south.

## **3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The earliest known dating evidence in the vicinity of Wykham Park was discovered in 1851: evidence of walls, a well and an oven were amongst Roman remains found in the NW corner of the park, and were thought to be associated with a Romano-British house or a small villa (PRN 1713). The proposal area lies to the immediate south of these remains, and in the field to the west is the deserted medieval village of Wykham, formerly Wickham (PRN 1100).

Wickham is mentioned in Domesday and at that time had a population of nine serfs and villeins. Also mentioned is a mill - perhaps the predecessor to the present Wykham mill. Documentary references relating to the village subsidy show that the village continued to thrive into the C16. However, by the time of Edward Grantham's 'The Map of Wickam' (1688) there is no evidence of the village, except for a single cottage (VCH 10, 46-56).

Deep ploughing of Wykham Park to the west of the school in 1986 revealed a well, located in the vicinity of the cottage on the 1688 map. The well was not dated, but could relate to either the Roman finds of 1851, or the medieval village. In advance of further ploughing of the field in 1987, fieldwalking was carried out. Concentrations of Roman pottery were found in the SE corner of the field, to the S of the 1851 discoveries, whilst a greater concentration of medieval pottery was located to the west of the field (Crutchley, Taylor & Hornbrook, 1988).

## **4. RESULTS**

Topsoil stripping of the site was observed. Subsequently all of the foundation trenches for the new building were examined during, or immediately after excavation. A number of representative sections of these trenches were recorded. The observed layers are described in tabular form below.

The earliest deposit recorded in the foundation trenches was a layer of large horizontal marlstone slabs [6], interpreted as the geological horizon. This was sealed a layer of reddish-brown silty clay [5], which contained quantities of marlstone. A possible ploughsoil [4] sealed 5, and was overlain by a modern dump of hardcore gravel [3], and a former topsoil [2]. The present topsoil [1] is a dark grey-brown clay loam.

Two pieces of medieval tile, a modern flower pot sherd and one bone fragment were recovered from layer 4. Several sherds of modern pottery and one medieval sherd were recovered from the spoil heaps. There was no evidence of Roman remains within the trenches.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

No significant archaeological remains were found during the course of this watching brief. It would appear that the Roman finds/buildings must lie outside the limits of Tudor Hall School, and judging from the lack of Roman finds, some distance away. The medieval village of Wykham did not extend this far: the few medieval sherds present derive from ploughing of the fields. Much of the building area had been previously affected when the present building complex was constructed. While this had disturbed the uppermost deposits on this site, any substantial features or structures would have survived below the level of this disturbance. Such features must therefore be presumed absent from this site.

## 6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

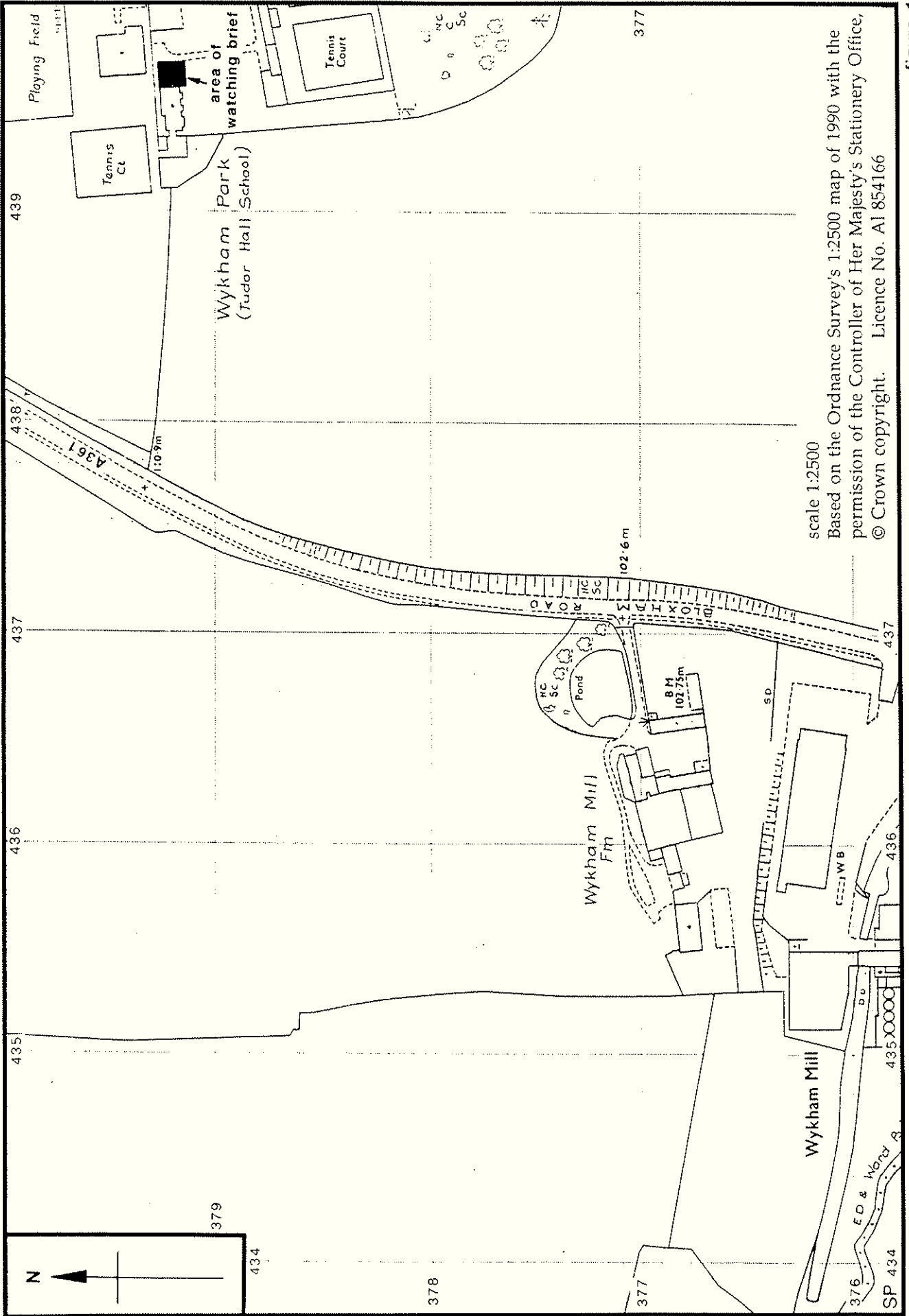
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Table of context information

Ctx	Type	Depth	Comments
1	Layer	0.12 m	Present topsoil and turf
2	Layer	0.12 m	Red-brown sandy loam
3	Layer	0.24 m	Modern hardcore next to N wall
4	Layer	0.35 - 0.70 m	Reddish brown clay, ploughsoil or hillwash
5	Layer	0.50 m	As 4, greater density of stone
6	Layer	-	Natural stone



scale 1:2500  
 Based on the Ordnance Survey's 1:2500 map of 1990 with the  
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figure 1



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