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BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY
FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
AT
STRETTON ON FOSSE
WARWICKSHIRE

B.U.F.A.U.



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An archaeological evaluation in advance of development at

Town Farm North and Cherry Blossom Farm, Stretton-on-Fosse, Warwickshire

The proposed conversion of a number of farm out-buildings within the area scheduled as an ancient monument (AM 168) was evaluated to determine the archaeological implications by BUFAU in May 1988. The area had been scheduled following the excavation in 1969 of an area containing prehistoric and Romano-British settlement evidence to the south and south-west (Figure 1). The present evaluation was undertaken at the request of the HBMC(England) and was carried out on behalf of the landowners by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit.

The buildings and paddocks, which comprise the two farms, lie on ground sloping away northwards from the area of known archaeological survival, towards the village. Most of the conversion of existing farm buildings will involve little or no sub-surface disturbance and consequent risk to early deposits. The trenches required to take services (0.60m deep) pose the greatest potential threat, and the majority of evaluation trenches were thus positioned to assess their impact.

Previous archaeological and contractors' work in the area had revealed a natural sub-soil varying from pure sand to compact gravelly marl. The former appears to occupy localised pockets within the marl and has been quarried in the past.

A total of five one metre-wide trenches (A1-5) were dug (Figure 1), three with the assistance of a machine.

A1-3: These trenches were excavated using a machine along the farm track leading to the lane, and to the south of building 2. They revealed a gravelly marl sub-soil covered by a thin layer of trample, less than 15cms deep. No archaeological deposits or finds were observed.

A4: A machine-stripped trench to the west of building 1 revealed a stiff clay subsoil, sealed by post-medieval stony soil and turf. This stony horizon sealed a shallow linear feature which was filled with a homogenous silty clay. This feature became very shallow (to c.15cms) at the northern end of the trench where the ground falls away, suggesting a considerable truncation of earlier levels in this direction. No finds were recovered from this feature.

A5: The steeply sloping ground to the west of building 3 was tested by a hand-dug trench. Much of the slope at this point seems to have been caused by a dump of clean stiff clay, used in part to fill and seal a series of large features, of which the trench revealed only a small section. These features may be relatively recent rubbish or sand quarrying pits thought by the owner to have been dug in this area. No finds were recovered from the clay, although the stony horizon which sealed it contained some post-medieval material.

Three trenches were excavated within the environs of Town Farm, with the assistance of a mechanical digger (Figure 1). Access to much of this area was restricted by extensive concrete yard surfaces.

B1: A hand-dug trench dug through the concrete farm yard revealed c.30cms of modern rubble which sealed a series of pipe-trenches cut into the natural. The natural here was a soft yellow sand very little of which had been left undisturbed. There were no finds of archaeological significance.

B2: This area had been heavily disturbed by recent cultivation and no intact deposits of archaeological significance were revealed by this trench. The natural sand was sealed by c.20cms of cultivation soil and was cut by several post-medieval features.

B3: The area inside the barn at the southern extreme of the area was tested by a small sondage which contacted natural gravelly marl at a depth of a few centimetres. No archaeological features or finds were observed, and it seems likely that most of the area covered by the barn was lowered during its construction. The ground level to the west is higher by nearly 1.5 metres, and the eastern half of the barn is known to be occupied by a system of drying chambers, now disused.

Conclusions and Recommendations

No intact archaeological deposits or features demonstrably earlier than of the post-medieval period were contacted in the area evaluated; throughout, an area which has evidently been subjected to intense disturbance over the last century and more recently. No finds earlier than of the 19th century were recovered, even as residual material in later contexts. In view of the proximity of an extensive Romano-British settlement, possibly a villa, and its earthworks immediately to the south, the total absence of archaeological features or even residual finds is somewhat surprising. However, in almost every instance the evaluation trenches encountered a truncated natural subsoil or evidence of extensive modern disturbance, and these processes may have destroyed any earlier evidence for human activity in the areas for development.

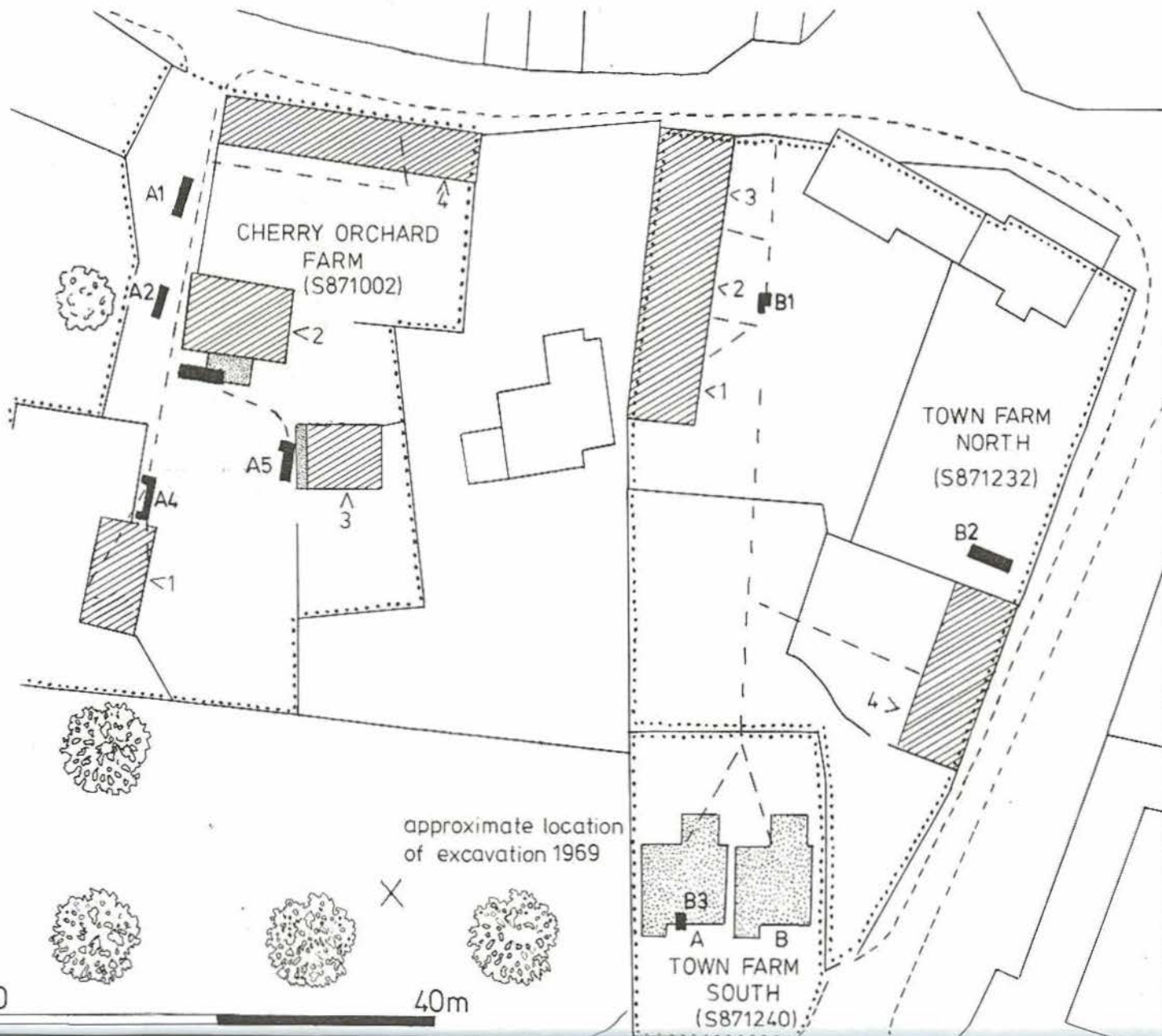
On the basis of this evaluation the risk posed by the proposed work to archaeological remains can be considered to be minimal. It should however be borne in mind that excavation of service trenches and new building footings will involve more extensive areas, not all of which could be adequately evaluated on this occasion. We would therefore recommend that a watching brief be undertaken by a qualified archaeologist during this phase of development works.







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STRETTON-ON-FOSSE location of excavated trenches



-  existing house
-  proposed barn conversion
-  proposed household extensions
-  service trench/drain
-  edge of separate applications
-  location of excavated trenches