

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit

Report No.333

January 1995

**Land at Stratford Road, Near Longbridge,
South-west Warwick, Warwickshire.
Stage 1 : Desk Top Study**

by

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Introduction

The following report outlines the results of the first stage of an archaeological evaluation to be carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit, commissioned by Wood Frampton Chartered Town Planning Consultants on behalf of Severn Trent Property Limited and Stanifer Limited, on land at Stratford Road, Near Longbridge, South-east Warwick (N.G.R SP 271634), prior to a proposed development. The preliminary stage of the evaluation consisted of a 'desk top study' of the available primary and secondary documentary sources, cartographic sources and aerial photographic evidence relating to the site. The majority of the documentation consulted is held by the County Sites and Monuments Record and County Records Office. A site visit was also carried out to record any possible surface features which may be of archaeological significance.

The Site

The site lies approximately 0.5km west of the River Avon at 46m A.O.D. The drift geology is mainly second terrace river gravels with Mercian mudstone to the west. The site occupies 23 hectares with the Stratford Road forming the eastern boundary of the site, a brook marking the southern boundary and the A46(T) forming the western boundary. The site consists of former arable fields which have been allowed to develop a light covering of grass, weed and patchy thistle, making fieldwalking impracticable. Ditches and rabbit holes were inspected during the site visit, but no archaeological features or artifacts were visible. No evidence of surface archaeological features could be observed.

Archaeological Background

Aerial photography over recent years has demonstrated high potential for identifying settlement on river gravels in the prehistoric period, particularly the Iron Age, (Cunliffe 1991), and early historic periods in the West Midlands. Within 1.5km of the site are 7 cropmark sites recognised by aerial photography. To the south-west are two enclosures (WA 697) and a possible trackway (WA 5159). Also to the south is a cropmark complex (WA 966) including an enclosure, a possible trackway and other linear features. Further to the east another cropmark complex (WA 4685) includes a possible trackway, other linear features and a ring ditch. To the north of this complex is a 'D' shaped enclosure (WA 5515), possibly Iron Age on morphological grounds, and an elongated rectangular enclosure (WA 1921), possibly a neolithic cursus on morphological grounds.

Also to the south of the site, 0.3km from the River Avon, a large scatter of worked flint tools (WA 6377) was located in 1991. Flints recovered from this scatter are still awaiting detailed study, but they may date from the Neolithic to the Bronze age.

The site of an Anglo-Saxon cemetery (WA 1982) lies to the east of the Stratford Road, discovered in 1875 by workmen digging for gravel (Burgess 1876). Graves containing human skeletons were excavated in an area 15m by 18m. Finds recovered included Anglo-Saxon pottery, weapons, a silver armlet, brooches, amber beads, and bronze 'buckets'. The site was said to lie in a field one mile due east of

Warwick near Longbridge at an angle of Warwick Castle Park, where the Fisher Brook forms the boundary on its way to the Avon. However, the probable site of the cemetery was investigated before development in the 1960s and no evidence of the cemetery was found (Taylor 1968).

Cartographic Evidence

The earliest relevant map evidence consulted was the 1848 tithe apportionment map. The site was divided into five pasture fields and one arable field owned by William Staunton. Two buildings were depicted in the centre of the site. Later Ordnance Survey maps (OS 25" to one mile) show that some boundaries depicted on the earlier map have been removed and there is no trace of the buildings.

Aerial Photographic Evidence

Aerial photographs taken by the RAF in 1947 (26/SE) show the site was under arable cultivation at that time. Several faint, slightly curving, linear soil marks can be seen orientated northeast-southwest. These do not appear to coincide with field boundaries noted from the cartographic evidence. They may be pre 19th-century field boundaries or earlier linear features.

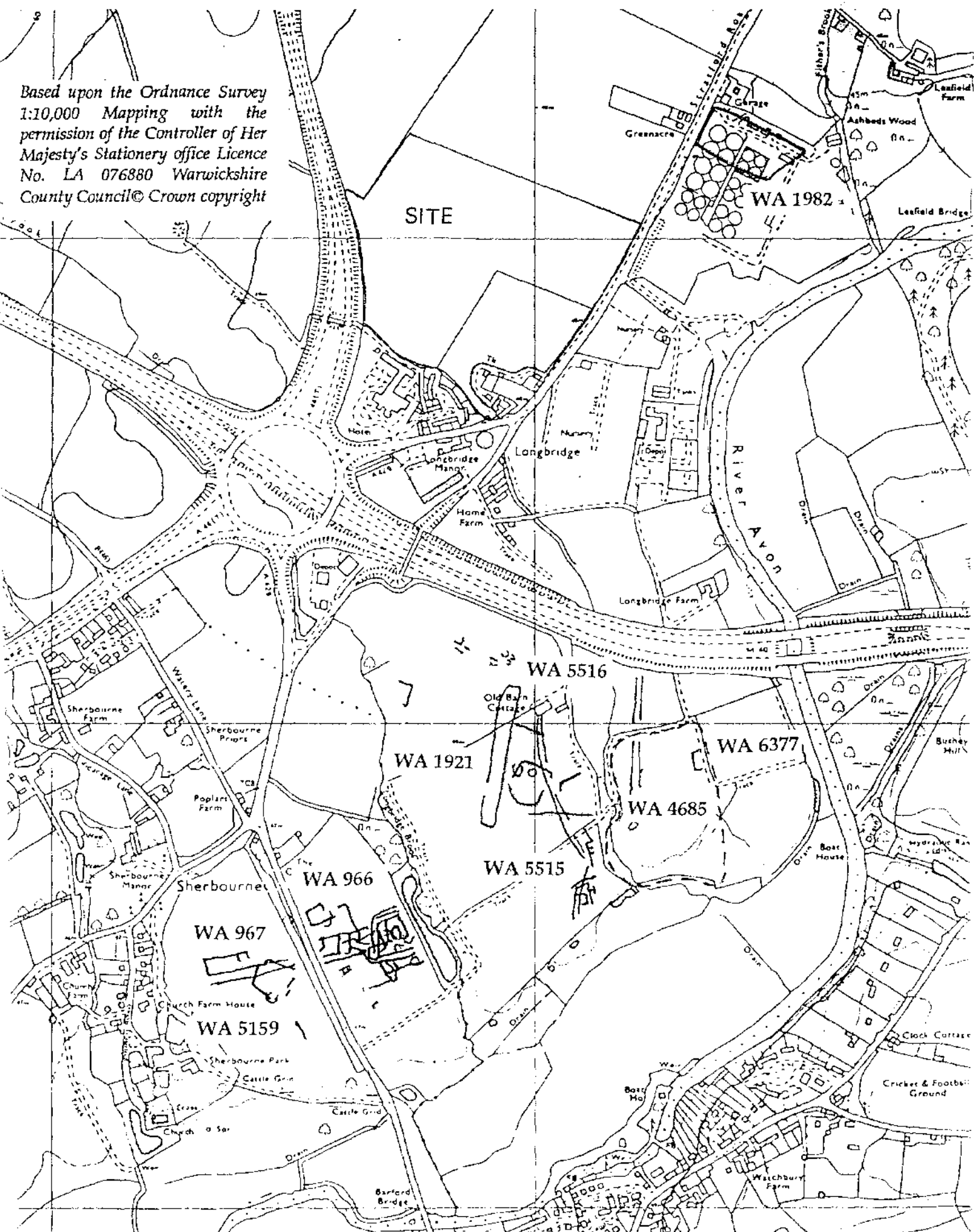
Summary and Conclusion

The 'desk-top' study of the site has identified the close proximity of the cropmark features. These features may reflect the presence of settlement features, probably of prehistoric to Romano-British date. There is a strong possibility that similar features lie in the area of the proposed development and that later land use has meant identification of such features by aerial photography is not possible. The close proximity of the site of an Anglo-Saxon cemetery raises the possibility of associated settlement in the development area. Other possible features and a building identified from aerial photographs and cartographic sources are of uncertain date and function.

References

- Burgess, J.T, 1876, '*Recent Discoveries in Warwickshire*', in *Archaeological Journal*, 1876, No.33.
Cunliffe, B, 1991, *Iron Age Communities in Britain*.
Taylor, S, 1968, *West Midlands Archaeological Newsheet*, No.11.

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