

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit

Report No. 355

July 1995

**RIVER COLE FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME,
COLESHILL, WARWICKSHIRE**

An Archaeological Assessment 1995

by Richard Cuttler

For further information please contact:
Simon Buteux, Iain Ferris or Peter Leach (Directors),
Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit,
The University of Birmingham,
Edgbaston,
Birmingham B15 2TT
Tel: 0121 414 5513
Fax: 0121 414 5516

RIVER COLE FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME, COLESHILL, WARWICKSHIRE

An Archaeological Assessment 1995

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Methodology
- 3.0 The study area
- 4.0 The cropmark evidence
- 5.0 Walkover survey results
- 6.0 Discussion
- 7.0 Implications
- 8.0 Mitigation
- 9.0 Presentation
- 10.0 References
- 11.0 Acknowledgements

Figures

- 1 The study area and its setting
- 2 The study area; the cropmark evidence
- 3 The study area; engraving of 1783, view north

Plates

- 1 Coleshill bridge, east (original) face
- 2 Coleshill bridge, detail, showing widening to west
- 3 Swan Barn
- 4 Swan Barn and outbuildings
- 5 Detail of circular feature in Field 25

Appendices

- I Sites recorded
- II Air photographs
- III Map sources

RIVER COLE FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME

COLESHILL, WARWICKSHIRE

An Archaeological Assessment 1995

1:0 INTRODUCTION

1.1: Introduction and location

This report provides an archaeological assessment of an area of arable and pasture land, located immediately to the northeast of Coleshill, Warwickshire and to the southwest of the confluence of the Rivers Cole and Blythe (hereinafter called The Study Area: Fig. 1). This report, commissioned by the National Rivers Authority, provides an assessment of the archaeological potential of The Study Area, based upon a desk-top study and a rapid walkover survey.

1.2: Objectives

A brief for this work was provided by the National Rivers Authority. By the examination of historical, cartographic and aerial photographic records this study aims to identify sites of cultural or archaeological interest and potential, located within The Study Area, which may be affected by the proposed flood alleviation scheme. This report also provides an assessment of the effects of the proposed scheme upon the recorded archaeology, and a summary of proposals for site interpretation/ presentation.

Sites which lie outside, but in the close proximity of, The Study Area have been included where relevant to an understanding of the wider archaeological setting.

2.0: METHODOLOGY

The primary source of archaeological information for The Study Area and for the adjoining zone is the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) for Warwickshire, maintained by Warwickshire County Council. This contains a record of all reported archaeological sites, details of standing buildings of national importance, and the reported find-spots of individual artifacts. This information derives from discoveries made during archaeological fieldwork, during construction or development work, or from reports by amateur field-workers. With the exception of a quarry, little of The Study Area has been developed, and much of the area is pasture.

Relevant antiquarian and estate maps, tithe maps and First Edition Ordnance Survey maps formed the primary cartographic sources examined for this study. Secondary historical sources consulted include the Victoria County History and antiquarian sources.

North Warwickshire District Council was consulted to determine if any of the standing structures within The Study Area is listed.

The final stage of the assessment comprised a rapid walk-over survey, conducted in late June 1995. The methodology of the walk-over survey is discussed in detail below.

Air photograph coverage of the study area was consulted to identify features of natural and archaeological origin. The aerial photographs were examined by eye and under slight (1.5x) magnification, and were viewed as stereoscopic pairs whenever

possible. Features of archaeological, or possible archaeological, interest, and some features of natural origin, principally former river channels were interpreted and plotted on to a map of The Study Area at 1:5000 (Fig 2). The relevant photographic archives held at the Warwickshire County Records Office (St Joseph 1950) and the National Library of Air Photographs (listed in Appendix II) were consulted.

3.0: THE STUDY AREA

3.1: Definition

The Study Area, as defined by the brief prepared by the National Rivers Authority, includes both Phase 1 and Phase 2 areas within the overall flood alleviation scheme (Fig 1). However, by agreement with the National Rivers Authority this present study excludes consideration of that part of the Phase 2 area which is located on the east bank of the River Blythe.

The Study Area adopted for this present assessment is situated between N.G.R. SP 199895 and SP 211911. The eastern boundary is formed by the River Blythe, and the southern boundary is defined by Blythe Lane. To the west of The Study Area lies a zone of commercial and industrial development, while the northern boundary is formed by the Birmingham to Derby railway line.

The Study Area forms part of the flood plain of the River Cole, and much of the drift geology of the study area consists of alluvial deposits. These deposits are visible in places in the banks of the River Cole, and appear to measure up to 1.5m in depth. A band of Triassic Mercian Mudstone (formerly Keuper Marl) is mapped in the central part of The Study Area, along with deposits of river terrace gravels.

Much of the Phase 2 study area has been quarried, and some of the area of the quarry is in the process of being restored to agriculture.

3.2: The Prehistoric Period

Information concerning prehistoric activity within the vicinity of The Study Area derives from the recovery of individual artifacts, recorded in the Sites and Monuments Record, and from published archaeological sources.

The find spots of stray flint implements of Neolithic date are recorded to the east of the River Cole (S.M.R. No. 299: outside The Study Area). A partially-excavated Late Iron Age, or early Romano-British, settlement with associated field systems (S.M.R. No. 5130) is recorded on the east-facing slope of Grimstock Hill, overlooking the former flood plain of the River Cole. This site lies approximately 800m to the west of The Study Area (Fig 1). This site has been interpreted by its excavator as a series of farmsteads, occupied over an extended period of time. Occupation may have been restricted to the summer months, while the meadows at the base of the hillside along the River Cole (located within the study area) could have been exploited as pasture either through direct grazing or by being cropped for hay (Magilton 1980, 32).

Although burnt mounds, sites of generally Bronze Age date, comprising heat shattered stones set in a charcoal rich soil, are widely recorded in riverine environments, recent study of their distribution (Eherenberg 1991, 49) tends to suggest that they are concentrated along small streams and tributaries, and are not commonly found near major rivers.

The course of the River Cole in this vicinity may also have defined on the ground the boundary between the Civitas of the Corieltauvi to the northeast and that of the Cornovii to the southwest (Magilton 1980).

3.3: The Roman Period

The known Roman finds, in the near vicinity of The Study Area, comprise a hoard of 3,250 bronze coins unearthed in 1939 (SMR No. 280), to the north of Coleshill and outside the western boundary of The Study Area. The coins have been dated in the range between 310-353 AD.

The nearest known Roman road is Watling Street, which runs approximately east-west, and lies over 9 kilometres to the north of The Study Area. The nearest recorded Roman settlement is at Mancetter, located approximately 16km to the northeast of The Study Area. The Study Area is almost equidistant from the military bases at Mancetter and Metchley, Birmingham. Magilton (1980, 28) notes that any route between the two would most likely pass just to the north of the confluence of the River Cole and the River Blythe, to obviate the need for two river crossings. This postulated route could continue the line of the known Roman road from Leicester to Mancetter. However, there is presently no firm evidence for such a route from Mancetter to Metchley.

The location of a settlement focus of Late Iron Age and Roman date, lying to the west of the study area has already been noted in Section 3.2 above. This settlement, on Grimstock Hill, was abandoned, possibly early in the 2nd Century AD, and a Romano-British temple (SMR No. 4433) was constructed nearby. Two phases of temple construction were defined at excavation; the first involving timber construction, and the second, a re-building in stone.

Little evidence of settlement or agriculture exists from the end of the Roman period until the Norman conquest. Better quality soils were restricted to a relatively narrow band extending from north to south, lying to the east of the Blythe, which may have been favoured for cultivation, if not subject to frequent flooding. It has been recorded that the northern part of Warwickshire displays many of the features typical of dense woodland landscapes (Hooke 1988, 51).

3.4: The Medieval Period

By the time of the Norman Conquest Warwickshire was divided administratively into ten Hundreds, the largest of which was 'Coleshelle'. Its boundaries have essentially remained the same, except for a change of name in the 12th-century to Hemlingford Hundred (V.C.H. 1947a). Early tenants of the Manor of Blythe appear to have adopted the latter name. It has been suggested that William, a younger son of William De Waver, settled here around the 12th century. The family has been traced down to a Thomas Blythe who was living in 1400 (V.C.H. 1947c).

The manor of Blythe was divided into two after 1426 and remained under the control of two families until the two halves were bought by Reynold Belhurst in 1545 and 1562. In 1579 the manor passed to Reynold Belhurst's second son William.

Hamlet clusters with associated field systems had developed in the zone surrounding The Study Area in the medieval period. During this period The Study Area may have been primarily meadow. The main focus of the medieval market town of Coleshill lay on the higher ground, beyond the southwest boundary of The Study Area.

The date of the earliest water mill on the River Blythe (SMR No. 88: Fig. 2) is not recorded, although a watermill at Shustoke (east of The Study Area) was established no later than the mid 13th-Century. Two mills, located at Blythe End and Shustoke,

were conveyed to William Blythe in 1585 by Thomas Mootley and the former mill appears to have been part of the Blythe estate from that date.

The bridge over the River Blythe (located just outside the southern boundary of The Study Area) is one of the earliest stone bridges in Warwickshire (SMR No. 110). Originally constructed with five obtusely pointed arches, the bridge probably dates to the 14th-Century, and lay on the route between Coleshill and Shustoke to the east. The bridge was widened on both sides in 1926 and its original fabric is not visible

Two marl pits are referred to in a document dated 1590 (Field 1993, 86). These features have been provisionally identified during by air photograph analysis and the walk-over survey. Marl is decayed chalky soil and clays, which was used for spreading on the land.

3.5: The Post-Medieval Period

The Blythe estate was purchased in 1625 by the antiquarian Sir William Dugdale who built or rebuilt a mansion house on the east bank of the Blythe.

Dugdale and Burdett (1843) describe further building works at Blythe Hall "on the site of an ancient hall" by William Mellish who subsequently drained "a large extent of low land in the centre of his estate, capable of being made as fine meadow as any in England". A view of Blythe Hall and the surrounding area recorded in Dugdale (1730), is reproduced as Fig 3.

The map accompanying Dugdale's Antiquities of Warwickshire, prepared in 1656 (Dugdale and Burdett 1843), shows the landscape heavily dotted with trees. Coleshill bridge, in the extreme southwest of The Study Area dates from the 17th century. A plan of the parish of Coleshill by John Snape in 1783 records much of the low lying land adjacent to the River Cole as being meadow. This area of meadow coincides with a zone of alluviation caused by periodic flooding.

4.0: THE CROPMARK EVIDENCE (Fig 2)

The available air photograph coverage of The Study Area was consulted to locate and interpret cropmarks and earthworks which may be of archaeological, or possible archaeological, interest; some natural features, such as former stream channels were also recorded. Because the majority of the agricultural land within The Study Area is pasture, few cropmarks could be recorded, although some 'parch' marks within the pasture were identifiable. Other factors inhibit the visibility of cropmarks, including the presence of quarry workings and restored ground, extensive alluvial deposits, and areas overgrown with weeds. Earthworks were recorded, both as negative features, such as ditches, and above-ground features, such as banks.

Vertical photographs of the study area were available from ten years between 1948 and 1974. Some cropmarks were evident in successive years; others were only apparent occasionally.

The cropmark plot shows there to be traces of former ditched fields, aligned northwest-southeast, within the northern half of Field 16. Abandoned field boundaries are also evident within the southern half of Field 17, here following a slightly different alignment to those in Field 16. These field boundaries are visible on a number of photographs dating between 1948 and 1959. It may be that these are two parts of a larger, earlier field system, which, due to the regular shape of the fields, could be post-medieval in date.

In Fields 16 and 21 a row of four, very regular, circular depressions is evident. These may be the result of modern farming, or it may be 'dew ponds'. A post-medieval date seems most likely.

In Fields 20 (*Marl Pits Close*) and 22 (*Barn Close*) two large, circular depressions can be seen. One is located in the northeast corner of Field 20, the second is located in the northwest corner of Field 22: both were identified during the field survey. These features may possibly be the marl pits referred to in the document of 1590.

Two linear marks in Field 2 (*Puppies Croft*), and in the north of Field 3 (*Bridge Croft*), are aligned northwest-southeast; other linear parch marks are also recorded. These marks probably represent abandoned field boundaries.

The cropmark plot shows three linear parch marks in Fields 6 and 9, aligned northeast-southwest. These are probably infilled drainage channels or former field boundaries. Two marks aligned northwest-southeast in Field 6 coincide with field boundaries recorded on the Tithe map of 1840. A double ditched, and L-shaped mark, is evident forming the boundary between Fields 6 and 7. The marks, orientated northwest-southeast, are identifiable as field boundaries recorded on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1880. A slightly curving ditch to the south may be a separate cropmark, or it may be a continuation of the westernmost ditch. One further curving ditch is evident in the middle of Field 6 as a possible former river meander.

Marks in Fields 12 and 13 (*Cole Meadow*) were very distinctive, being easily visible in most years. The form of these marks suggests they may define former river channels.

Most of the marks in Fields 24 and 25 (*Cole Meadow*) may be interpreted as former field boundaries or river channels. However, one sub-circular cropmark towards the middle of Field 25, close to the River Cole, which appears very prominent in most years is difficult to interpret, although its sharp profile suggests a modern date.

Fields containing evidence of truncated ridge and furrow field systems are evident to the north of the former course of the River Cole (Fields 5 and 10: *Big Meadow*). This field has been truncated by modern quarrying. Soil marks apparent in May 1953 suggest that ridge and furrow, orientated northeast-southwest, formerly extended over the whole of this field. Further evidence of levelled ridge and furrow cultivation, orientated north-south, is evident in the eastern half of Field 8. Slight traces of ridge and furrow are also apparent in the southwestern corner of Field 3, where the ridge and furrow is aligned northeast-southwest.

5.0: WALKOVER SURVEY RESULTS (Figs 1-2)

5.1: Methodology

Most of The Study Area comprises pasture, which was examined during the walkover survey to record evidence of earthworks which may be of archaeological, or possible archaeological, interest. Areas under crop, the quarry workings, and the reconstituted ground were not investigated. Some of the pasture was heavily overgrown, and any archaeological features in these areas would not be apparent, except possibly during winter. The presence of alluvial deposits may also have masked features of archaeological interest. All visible surface features, of archaeological, or possible archaeological, interest were recorded on pre-printed pro-forma BUFAU field survey sheets. Selected features were also photographed. The walkover records are held in the archive.

5.2: The results

Phase 1 Area

Field 23. No field name. Overgrown pasture; no archaeological or possible archaeological features identified within the pasture. The course of the River Cole at this point is steep-sided with a flat base and appears to have been recently landscaped. Within this field the river is crossed by a ford.

A rapid examination of the riverbank make-up suggests a significant build-up of alluvial deposits occurred in this area, measuring approximately 1.5m in depth. A number of differing horizons are recognisable within this alluviation.

Coleshill Bridge (Warwickshire Scheduled Ancient Monument 029: SMR No. 283: Plates 1-2), in the extreme south of The Study Area, is built of red sandstone ashlar, and possibly dates to the mid 16th-century. The bridge is supported on five piers with V-shaped cutwaters on both faces. The middle pier is entirely rebuilt, mostly with brick, whilst some of the others have been repaired on the east face. The pier parapets, except those above the middle pier, are slightly recessed above the top of the lower parts of the V-faces. Above the end arches, the ashlar courses are sloped down to the original steep ramps, and later masonry has been added above these courses at the northern end. Its original width of approximately 2.3m has been nearly doubled by widening in brick on its western face.

A ford was recorded between Fields 23 and 24, crossing the Cole.

Field 24. No field name. Flat, slightly undulating pasture which rises to the east. The field contains a linear depression aligned north-south, which may be the remains of a former channel of the River Cole. It was observed that the grass in a zone adjoining the River was notably parched.

Field 25. '*Cole Meadow*' (Snape's map, 1783). Flat, slightly undulating pasture. It contains a continuation of the former river channel, also recorded in Field 24 to the south. Other slight linear depressions recorded may be interpreted as infilled drainage channels. A shallow, ovoid depression is evident in the northwest corner. This is approximately 4m wide and 6m in length, and is aligned north-south. As in Field 24, the grass adjoining the Cole is notably parched in places.

A shallow bank, measuring approximately 15m in length and aligned north-south, is also recorded in the southwest corner of the field.

Of particular interest is the definition of a circular earthwork feature (Plate 5) located towards the middle of the field, near to the bank of the River Cole. This feature is apparent as a ditch with a steep-sided profile. This feature measures approximately 35m in diameter, and is approximately 0.3m in depth; this earthwork was also recorded by aerial photography.

Phase 2 Area

Field 1. No field name. Pasture on the west bank of the Blythe, which is overgrown to waist height. Field located at the confluence of the River Cole and the River Blythe. The present channel of the Cole is a recent diversion. No earthwork features could be identified.

Field 2. '*Puppies Croft*' (Tithe map 1839/40). Pasture overgrown to waist height. Field truncated to the northwest by the modern course of the River Cole. No earthwork features could be identified.

Field 3. 'Bridge Croft' and 'Gipsy Piece' (Tithe map 1839/40). Overgrown pasture, a combination of three former fields, partly quarried. Two linear depressions, aligned northeast to southwest, correspond with former field boundaries marked on the tithe map.

Bridge Croft field has a public footpath along its northeastern edge. This crosses the rebuild of a 17th century footbridge over the River Blythe, described as a packhorse bridge (VCH 1947a, 206). It is of three bays with semi-circular arches of the 17th century and cut-waters to the piers, all of red sandstone; the middle bay being higher than the others causing a 'hump back'. The haunches and parapets are of red brick with stone copings and square piers above the cut-waters, of the late 18th century. The gangway appears to have been rebuilt from red brick in the 20th-century. Ashlar blocks lying in the river-bed may be the remains of former bridge builds.

A ford across the River Blythe is recorded to the east of this field; it may have been used in connection with Blythe Mill.

Field 4. 'Withy bed' (Tithe map 1839/40). Overgrown pasture field, the eastern boundary formed by the Blythe, the western boundary (with Field 3) formed by drainage channel. At the northeastern end of the field is a weir and a set of three sluice gates constructed from sandstone blocks. The mechanism for raising the gates is still in place although in a state of disrepair. These gates formerly controlled the flow of water to Blythe Mill (SMR No. 88).

Field 5. Southern part of *'Big Meadow'* (Tithe map 1839/40). Overgrown pasture on the west bank of the Blythe. The northernmost part of this field has been quarried away. A linear depression, aligned northeast-southwest, corresponds with a former field boundary marked on the tithe map.

Field 6. No field name. Mown pasture field. A meandering linear depression, aligned approximately north-south, curves to the northeast and runs parallel to the course of the River Cole. This feature may be interpreted as a former river channel.

Field 7. 'Feeding Grounds with Plantation' (Tithe map 1839/40). Mown pasture. A linear depression, aligned north-south, is probably a former field boundary. A very slight rise in the ground surface adjoining the river is probably associated with the new course of the river.

Field 8. No field name. Mown pasture. Slight traces of ridge and furrow are evident in the eastern half of this field. Two meandering linear depressions may be interpreted as former river channels.

Field 9. 'Law Meadow' and 'Feeding Grounds With Plantation' (Tithe map 1839/40). Arable with one drainage channel in the position of a similar feature marked on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map.

Field 10. Northern part of *'Big Meadow'* (Tithe map 1839/40). Mown pasture. Very ephemeral traces of ridge and furrow ploughing, aligned northeast-southwest, are visible along the northern perimeter. A shallow, curvilinear, S-shaped ridge, aligned approximately northwest-southeast corresponds to the original course of the River Cole. Two linear depressions, aligned northwest to southeast, probably represent former river channels. A further linear depression, following a similar alignment, may be interpreted as a former meander of the Cole.

Field 11. 'Cole Meadow' (Snape's map, 1783). Mown pasture. A former tributary of the River Cole is evident as a dry, open channel along the northern boundary. A linear depression aligned east-west, probably represents a former river meander.

Field 12. 'Cole Meadow' (Snape's map, 1783). Overgrown pasture field on the east bank of the River Cole. An irregular linear depression, aligned approximately east-west, probably represents a former meander. A second linear depression, aligned northeast-southwest, probably represents a former drain or field boundary.

Field 13. 'Cole Meadow' (Snape's map, 1783). Overgrown pasture field on the east bank of the Cole. A shallow linear depression, and measuring approximately 5m in width, aligned north-south, may represent a former river channel. An irregular bank, in the northwestern corner of the field, may be associated with a former field boundary.

Field 14. No field name. Overgrown pasture; no features identified, except for a ford cross the River Cole, which is also marked on modern mapping.

Field 15. No field name. Overgrown pasture; quarried away to the east. No features identified.

Field 16. 'Long Leasows' (Snape's map 1783). Part arable and part abandoned pasture, which appears to be reinstated ground. No features identified.

Field 17. No field name. Overgrown pasture containing clay pipe fragments, modern brick and tile and a few sherds of 17th to 18th century pottery. No features identified.

Field 18. No field name. Field under crop, not examined. This field is a sub-division of a larger field.

Field 19. No field name. Small coppice, no features identified.

Field 20. 'Marl Pit Close' (Snape's map 1783). Field under crop, not examined.

Field 21. 'Marsh' (Snape's map 1783). Gently undulating pasture containing three linear depressions, aligned east-west. These are probably the result of land reclamation.

Field 22. 'Barn Close' (Snape's map, 1783). Sloping pasture containing in its northeast corner a large ovoid pit, which measures approximately 80m by 30m. It seems likely that this is the remains of one of two marl pits noted in 1590. A bank aligned north-south, in the centre of the field, may be interpreted as the remains of an abandoned field boundary. Part of this field has been quarried.

Swan's Barn (Plates 3-4), a brick farmhouse of ?18th-19th-century date is located in the northwest corner of Field 22. A number of dilapidated outbuildings cluster around the main building, which is recorded on Snape's plan of 1783. This structure is unlisted.

6.0: DISCUSSION

6.1: Prehistoric and Roman

No evidence of prehistoric or Roman activity within The Study Area is recorded in the Sites and Monuments Record, or was encountered during the walkover survey.

However, evidence of both prehistoric and Roman activity is recorded in the vicinity of The Study Area. The recovery of stray finds of flint, dated to the Neolithic period suggests at least sporadic activity nearby in this period. Iron Age

activity is represented by the settlement at Grimstock Hill (SMR No. 5130), located approximately 800m to the west of The Study Area. This site may have remained a settlement focus into the later Roman period (Magilton 1980). It has been suggested (Section 3.2 above) that the lowlying land adjoining the Cole may have been exploited for pastoral farming, although there is presently no firm evidence to support this hypothesis.

6.2: Medieval and post-medieval

There is no recorded evidence of activity within The Study Area in the immediate post-Roman and medieval periods, with the exception of Coleshill bridge. No features of demonstrable medieval date were identified during the walkover survey.

The main focus of medieval activity in the vicinity will have been the market town of Coleshill, located on the higher ground, away from the lower-lying land bordering the rivers Cole and Blythe. Coleshill bridge (SMR No. 110) dates from the 14th-Century. Documentary evidence suggests that Blythe Hall (SMR No. 88), located on the east bank of the River Blythe (outside the eastern limit of The Study Area), had been established as a manor by the 12th-Century.

Blythe mill, located outside The Study Area, is perhaps the most important survival of the post-medieval landscape. The mill was linked to the west bank of the Blythe by a ford, which remains in use.

Traces of ridge and furrow ploughing recorded within The Study Area suggest the exploitation of the area for arable, as well as pastoral, farming. This ridge and furrow is undated, and may be provisionally dated to the medieval, or more probably the post-medieval period. Much of The Study Area may also have been utilised as pasture. Abandoned field boundaries and former man-made drainage channels have been recorded throughout The Study Area during the walkover survey. The slight mound recorded in Field 7 was probably caused by groundworks during the diversion of the Cole. Similarly, a recent date may be ascribed to the circular ditched earthwork recorded in Field 25.

6.3: Summary

With the exception of the scattered areas of ridge and furrow, little evidence of settlement or activity has been recorded within The Study Area. However, it is important to appreciate the limitations of the evidence provided by the present study, as a result of the predominance of pasture within The Study Area. Although the entire Study Area (excepting the areas under crop and the working quarry) was examined during the walkover survey, the features identified comprise mainly disused field boundaries and former stream channels. Equally, the definition of buried archaeological features from aerial photographs in areas of pasture is especially difficult, and only comparatively broad features may be defined as parch marks in pasture. Furthermore, a brief examination of the river banks suggests a considerable accumulation of alluvium in places. This alluvium, which is undated, may have the effect of masking any buried archaeological features, especially those of medieval or earlier date.

6.4: The natural environment: the Cole/Blythe confluence

The evidence for alluviation has been noted above. Although the systematic examination of long lengths of the river banks was outside the scope of this study, evidence from the walkover survey has indicated that extensive alluviation has occurred in places. Of particular note is the alluvium noted in Field 23, where observations indicated that a number of distinct horizons could be defined.

The deposition of alluvium may have the effect of sealing and preserving archaeological deposits, as well as rendering them invisible from a surface inspection, such as a walkover survey. Furthermore, analysis of the sequence and composition of the alluvium could provide valuable information concerning environmental change at the Cole/Blythe confluence, which could contribute to our understanding of the development of this landscape. Given the widespread presence of infilled river channels, albeit undated, some potential may also exist for the study of pollen, insects and plant remains from the sediments, which could enhance our understanding of the riverside flora and fauna.

6.5: The field-name evidence (Fig 2)

Most field names within The Study Area describe the local topography or land-use (e.g. marsh), or relate to the land ownership (e.g. Barn Close) of individual parcels of land. Of interest is Bridge Croft (Field 2), which probably relates to the bridge over the Blythe.

7.0: IMPLICATIONS

7.1: Scheme effects

The proposed flood alleviation scheme may affect archaeological deposits and features in a number of ways. In particular, the lowering of the ground level adjacent to Coleshill bridge, and the tying-in of a flood embankment, will have an effect upon the bridge, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Groundworks during the creation of the flood bank elsewhere within The Study Area could have the effect of disturbing archaeological deposits and features, and the bank itself will affect the landscape of the Cole/Blythe confluence.

Archaeological features and deposits within the zone proposed for the excavation of the new river channel would be directly affected by the scheme; additionally the landscape of the river confluence area would be affected. Archaeological features and deposits may also be affected by the creation of haul roads and construction compounds during the programme of works. However, with the possible exception of the circular earthwork feature in Field 25, and the truncated ridge and furrow remains in Field 8, there are no visible features of possible archaeological interest which could be affected by the scheme. The archaeological potential of archaeological remains not apparent from surface inspection cannot be established from the present evidence.

7.2: Significance of effects

The most significant effect of the scheme will be upon Coleshill Bridge, a Scheduled Ancient Monument, a site recognised as being of national importance. The structure of the bridge will not be directly affected, but part will be covered by the proposed flood embankment. Additionally, ground level will be lowered by approximately 1m in the vicinity of the bridge. This latter effect may be considered to be beneficial, since the adjoining ground level appears to have been raised after its construction, and lowering of the ground level will also expose more of the bridge structure to public view. The effect of the lowering of ground level on the structural integrity of the bridge is outside the scope of this assessment.

No other identified archaeological features and deposits would be directly affected by the scheme. However, the scheme will result in the alteration of the landscape setting of structures such as Swan Barn, Blythe Hall and Blythe Mill, although the

scheme may be considered overall to have a beneficial effect upon the landscape setting, as it will remove the artificial, and recently cut, linear river channel.

The scheme's effect upon any archaeological features or deposits sealed beneath alluvial deposits, and the effects upon important palaeoenvironmental evidence cannot be quantified from the present evidence. However, the presence of a number of undated former stream channels within the area of the proposed new river channel could suggest that some potential exists for the recovery of important palaeoenvironmental data.

8.0: MITIGATION

8.1: Consultation

A detailed mitigation strategy for the development would be provided by the County Archaeology Office of Warwickshire County Council; advice should also be sought from English Heritage concerning the impact of these proposals upon the Scheduled Ancient Monument.

In anticipation of this advice a preliminary outline of the proposed archaeological response is provided in Section 8.2 below.

8.2: Preliminary outline of mitigation works

(1) Coleshill Bridge.

Groundworks may require Scheduled Monument Consent.

It is recommended that any part of the bridge structure revealed by permanent or temporary lowering of the ground level be recorded by means of a scaled elevation drawing. It should be noted that more extensive recording may be appropriate if it is intended to prepare a display panel illustrating this bridge. These groundworks should be monitored by a qualified archaeologist (watching brief).

(2) Watching brief

A watching brief should be maintained during the excavation of the new river channel elsewhere within the scheme area, to record any archaeological features or deposits so exposed. This would involve the examination and selective recording of the exposed faces of the new river cutting, paying particular attention to the recording of features which are sealed beneath layers of alluvium.

(3) Sampling of alluvium and sampling for palaeoenvironmental evidence.

Consideration should be given to a programme of sampling of the alluvial deposits within the areas affected by the new river channels, either in advance of, or during, the groundworks. The aim of the sampling programme would be to provide information concerning the depositional history of the area, and to enhance our understanding of changes in the natural environment. This programme would involve sampling of the sequence of alluvial deposits at selected locations, sampling for C14 dating, and the collection of samples for insects, plant remains and pollen. This information would be of particular importance given the relative dearth of such data from north Warwickshire (information from James Greig, Department of Archaeology, University of Birmingham).

(4) Ridge and furrow

A measured plan of the affected areas of ridge and furrow earthworks should be prepared before the groundworks.

An outline costing for this proposal could be provided on request.

9.0: PRESENTATION

Consideration should be given to the provision of display boards at Coleshill bridge and at the packhorse bridge across the River Blythe. Such a display at Coleshill bridge may be considered to be particularly merited by its status as a Scheduled Ancient Monument, and by reason of its proximity to a major public thoroughfare.

The proposed display at both bridges could comprise a small vandal-proof display board containing a brief description of the monument and its historic context, illustrated by drawings or photographs identifying the different builds and architectural features of each structure.

A detailed costing for this proposal could be provided on request.

10.0: REFERENCES

Blagg, T. 1986. Roman Religious Sites in the British Landscape. *The Journal of the Society for Landscape Studies* Vol. 8.

Dugdale, T. and Burdett, W. 1843. *England and Wales Delineated* Vol.2.

Dugdale, W. 1730. *The Antiquities of Warwickshire*. Reprinted Facsimile 1973.

Crickmore, J. 1984. Romano-British Urban Settlements in the West Midlands. *British Archaeological Reports, British Series*, 27.

Ehrenberg, M. 1991. Some Aspects of the Distribution of Burnt Mounds, in Hodder, M.A. and Barfield, L.H. (Eds.), 41-48.

Field, J. 1993. *A History of English Field Names*.

Gover, J.E.B., Mawer, A. and Stenton, F.M. 1936. *The Place-Names of Warwickshire*. English Place Name Society, Vol. 13.

Hodd, M.A. and Barfield, L. H. 1991. *Burnt Mound and Hot Stone Technology*. Sandwell MBC.

Hooke, D. 1988. The Warwickshire Arden: The Evolution and Future of an Historic Landscape. *The Journal of the Society for Landscape Studies* Vol. 10

Magilton, J.R. 1980. The Coleshill Romano-Celtic Temple: Some Reflections and New Discoveries. *West Midland Annual Archaeological New Sheet*, 23.

Margary, I.D. 1973. *Roman Roads in Britain*.

V.C.H. 1947a. *Victoria County History of Warwickshire*, Vol. 1.

V.C.H. 1947b. *Victoria County History of Warwickshire*, Vol. 2.

V.C.H. 1947c. *Victoria County History of Warwickshire*, Vol. 4.

11.0: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This assessment was commissioned by the National Rivers Authority. It was researched by Richard Cuttler. We would like to thank the Staff of the Warwickshire Record Office, the Sites and Monuments Record Officer for Warwickshire, and staff of the Planning Department North Warwickshire District Council for their assistance. The figures were drawn by Nigel Dodds, and the text was edited by Alex Jones.

APPENDIX I

Recorded sites within Phase 1 Area.

Coleshill bridge SMR. No. 283 Scheduled Ancient Monument No. 029 Late Medieval bridge ? of the C16. NGR SP19908955.

Recorded sites within Phase 2 Area.

Blythe Mill SMR No. 88 Documentary evidence of a watermill in use in 1587. NGR SP21009070.

Blythe Bridge SMR No. 110 Remains of a C14 Medieval bridge widened in 1926. No part of the original is now visible. NGR SP21058982.

Recorded sites in the vicinity of The Study Area.

Blythe Hall SMR No. 107 Built or rebuilt shortly after 1625. NGR SP 20959015.

The Stews Blythe Hall SMR No. 108 Ornamental fishponds C17. NGR SP 20959015.

Blythe Hall Dovecote SMR No. 109 NGR SP20959015.

Cole End Watermill SMR No. 282 No trace survives NGR SP19858960.

Coleshill Gas Works SMR No. 6592 NGR SP20038966.

Forge Mill Station SMR No. 6613 NGR 19969098.

Romano-British coin hoard SMR No. 280 NGR 19869007.

Listed buildings

Phase 1 Area

No buildings are listed within Phase 1 of the survey area.

Phase 2 Area

Blythe Mill, Mill House. Listed Building No. 11/186 House associated with Blythe watermill. Mid 18th century.

Blythe Mill. Listed Building No. 2/188. Watermill. 1754, Redbrick.

APPENDIX II

Air photographs

Warwickshire County Records office.

| Date | Scale | Frame Nos. | Library No. |
|------|---------|------------|-------------|
| 1950 | 1:10000 | | SP 200900 |

National Monument Record.

| Date | Scale | Frame Nos. | Library No. |
|----------|---------|------------|-------------|
| 09/03/48 | 1:10000 | 4117-4119 | 803 |
| 17/05/48 | 1:10000 | 4036-4037 | 850 |
| 19/07/51 | 1:9960 | 3092 | 1211 |
| 06/05/53 | 1:4600 | 13-16 | 1469 |
| 06/05/53 | 1:4600 | 72-75 | 1469 |
| 01/09/53 | 1:5000 | 135-138 | 1489 |
| 30/08/54 | 1:5000 | 8-12 | 1561 |
| 01/09/54 | 1:5000 | 8-11 | 1566 |
| 14/06/61 | 1:10000 | 290-292 | 2024 |
| 17/06/59 | 1:9900 | 176-177 | 2245 |
| 17/06/59 | 1:9900 | 175-177 | 2245 |
| 03/11/53 | 1:5000 | 132-135 | 2464 |
| 03/11/53 | 1:5000 | 140-144 | 2464 |
| 20/04/49 | 1:10000 | 4203-4206 | 4681 |
| 24/04/53 | 1:5600 | 67-71 | 3924 |
| 19/09/69 | 1:6000 | 11 | 5403 |
| 31/03/74 | 1:15000 | 25-27 | 7147 |
| 22/09/68 | 1:6600 | 36-38 | 10865 |

APPENDIX III: MAP SOURCES

1783: J. Snape Plan of Coleshill

1839-40 Tithe map of Coleshill

1887 Ordnance Survey 6 inch/ mile First Edition map

1903 Ordnance Survey 25 inch/ mile map

1924 Ordnance Survey 25 inch/ mile map

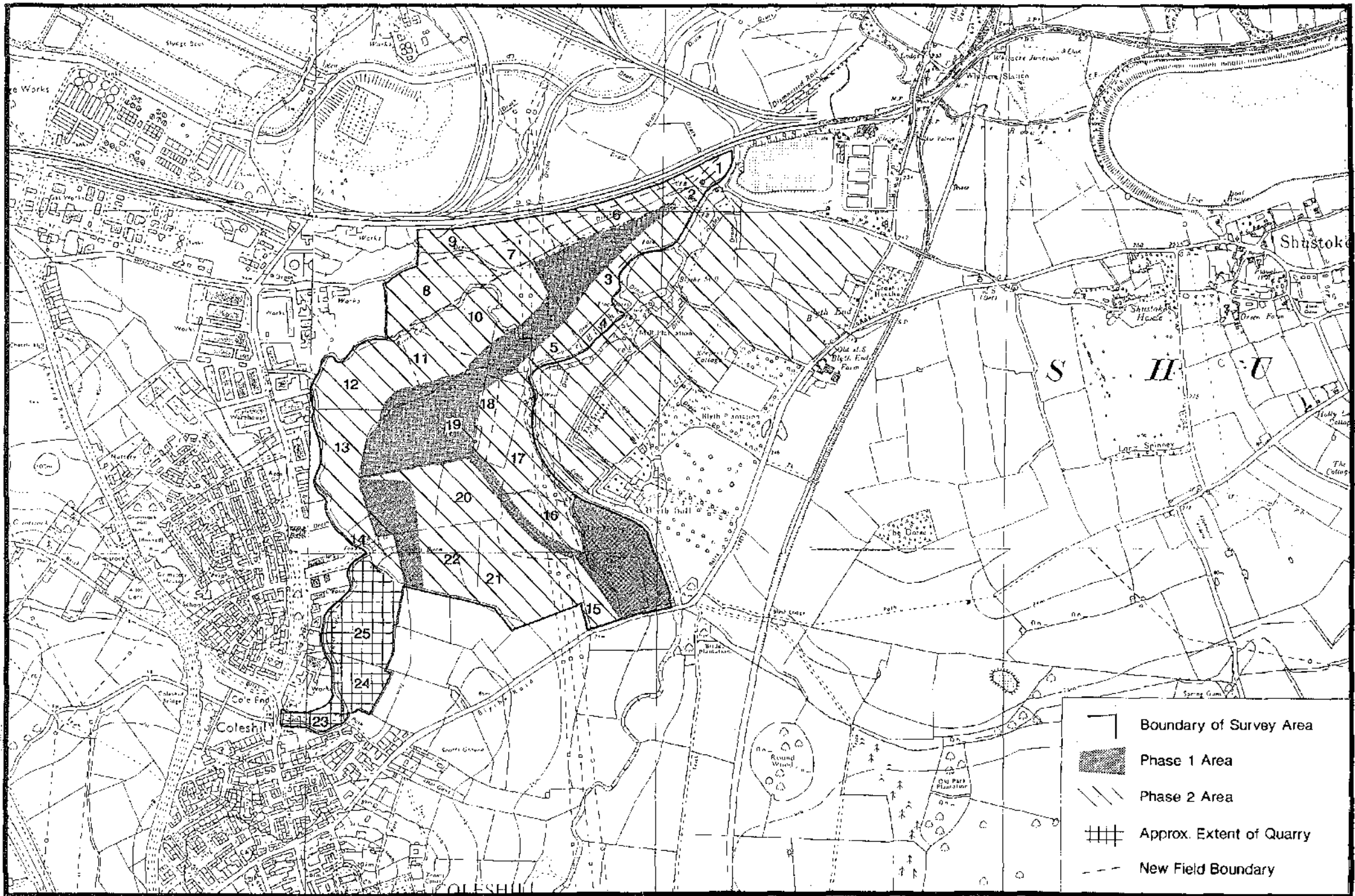
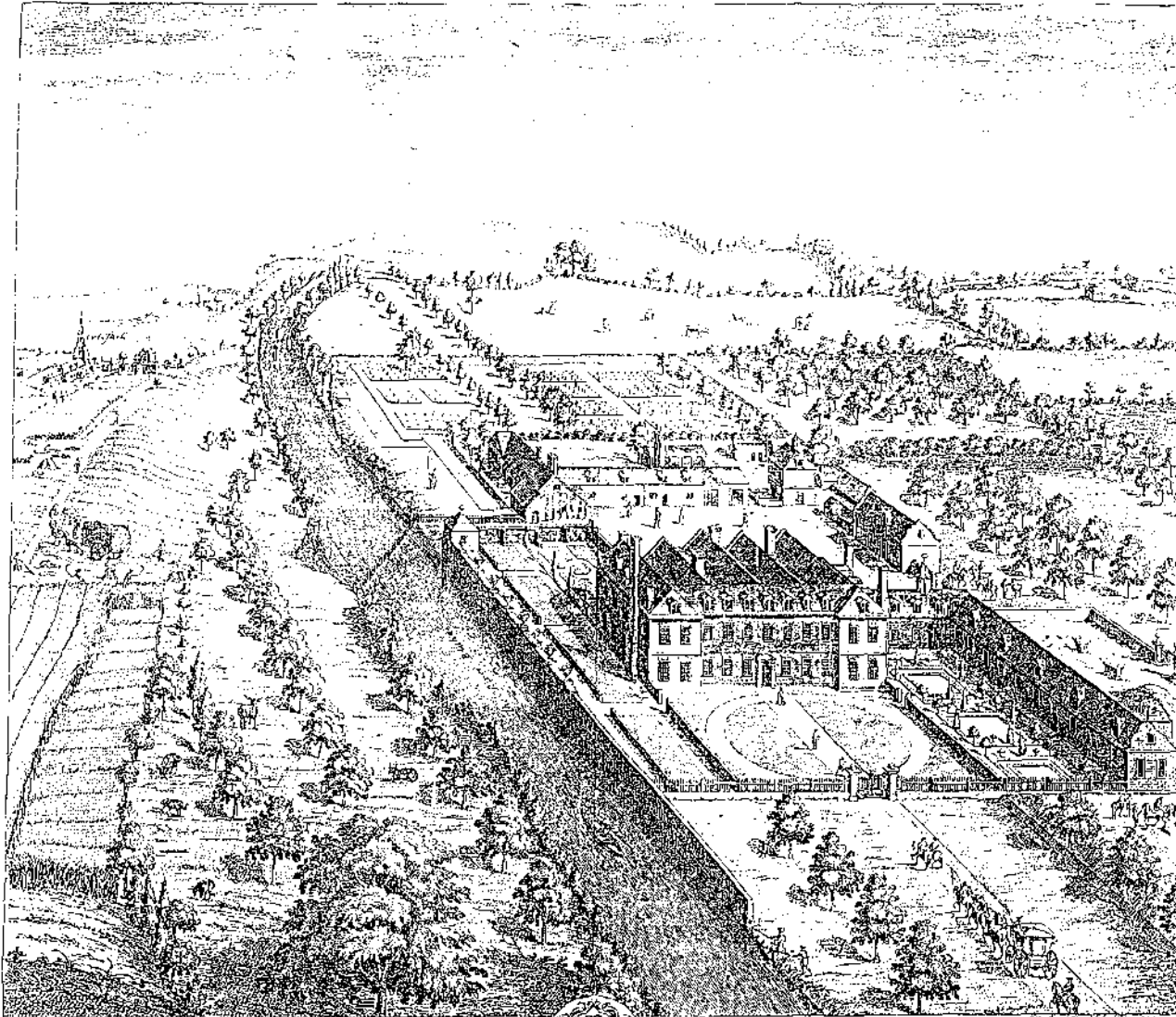


Fig. 1



*The South Prospect of BLETCHINGHEM, in Warwickshire, taken
 by the late Arthur S. Will Dugdale, late Gentleman King of Arms,
 and printed by the Rev. Mr. John Pugh, at the
 Press of the Rev. Mr. Pugh, in the Year 1793.*

Fig. 3

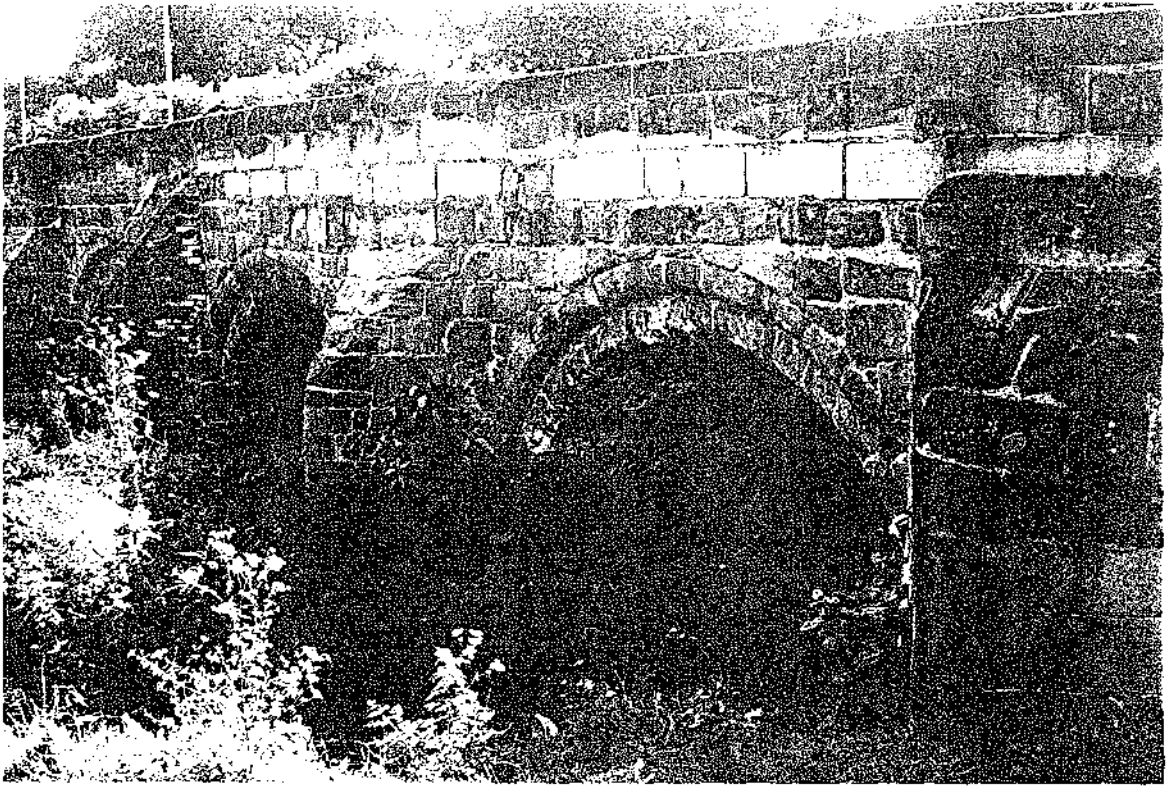


Plate 1

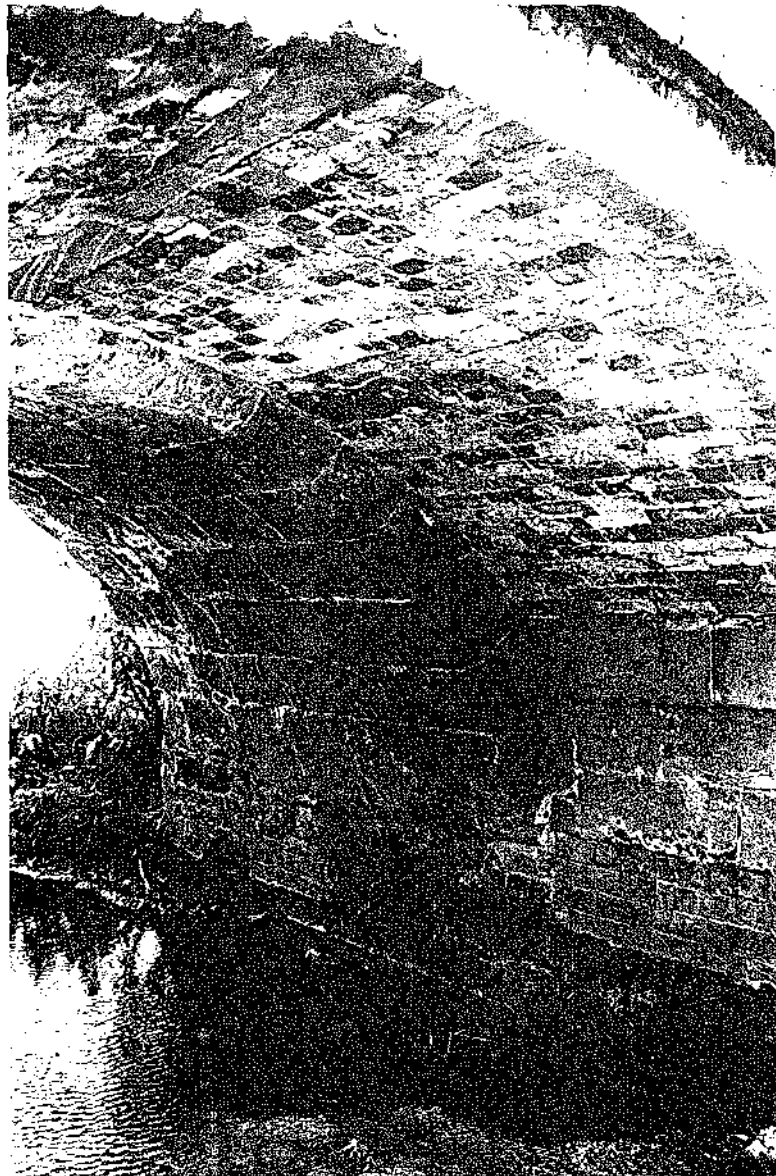


Plate 2



Plate 3

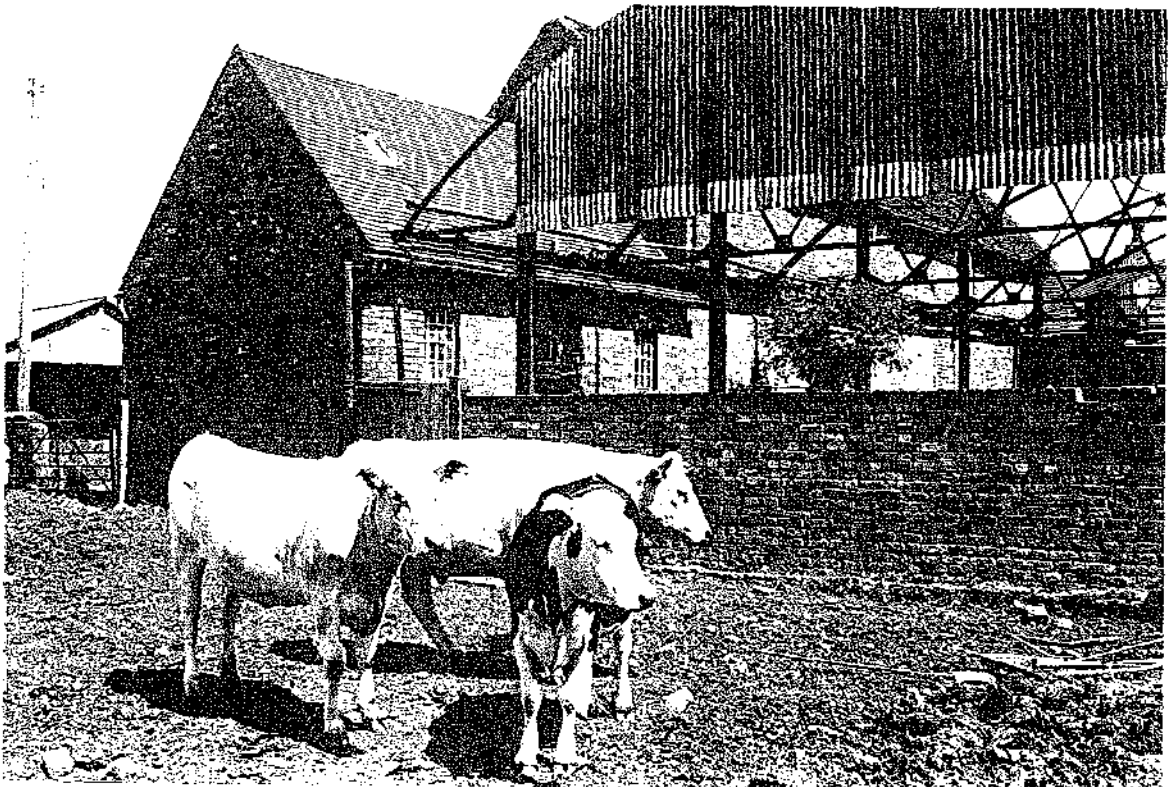


Plate 4



Plate 5