

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit

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**Archaeological Work: Milcote
Manor Farm, Warwickshire, 1995**

by

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit

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SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit at Milcote Manor Farm, Milcote, Warwickshire (SP 172 524) in September 1995. There is extensive evidence for archaeological activity in the vicinity including a number of cropmarked sites, a medieval Manor and a deserted Medieval settlement. Observations were made of all ground disturbance associated with the construction of a new agricultural building and an associated drainage trench. Nothing of archaeological significance could be identified apart from a undated linear feature in the section of the drainage trench.

INTRODUCTION

The following report describes the results of an archaeological watching brief at Milcote Manor Farm, in the parish of Milcote, Warwickshire (SP172 524), carried out prior to the construction of a new agricultural building (Figs 1 and 2). A total area of 836 square metres was affected by the proposal. The work was undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit and followed a brief prepared by Warwickshire Museum. Arrangements have been made for the deposition of the archive at the Warwickshire Museum. The work was undertaken on behalf of H W Smith Ltd.

The site lies on a gravel terrace on the southern bank of the River Avon. There are a large number of archaeological sites in the vicinity, including a number of cropmarked sites, possibly relating to prehistoric and Romano-British ritual and settlement activity. The area of the proposed agricultural building lies on the site of the medieval Milcote Manor (Warwickshire Sites and Monuments Record No. WA 5849) and Lower Milcote deserted medieval settlement (WA 1340). A Roman pottery lamp has been found in the gardens of the Manor (WA 5849). Clearly the site has a high archaeological potential.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the archaeological work was to obtain an adequate record of any archaeological deposits or finds disturbed or exposed by work associated with the development.

METHODS STATEMENT

The groundworks associated with the development were undertaken in two stages. Stage 1 involved the clearance of the area for the barn. This amounted to little more than the removal of vegetation and part of the hardcore surface from the area of the development. At the same time a drainage trench was excavated to the northwest of the proposed building. Stage 2 involved the excavation of a series of 21 stanchion holes for the foundations of the new building. All the ground disturbance was observed by appropriately qualified archaeologists. A contingency was included to undertake a programme of salvage recording if it was felt that any deposits and/or artefacts of archaeological importance were likely to be disturbed by the development. In the event it was not necessary to call upon this contingency.

Archaeological recording was undertaken using a continuous numbered context system and BUFAU pro-forma record cards. All identified deposits were photographed and a full drawn record at an appropriate scale was maintained.

RESULTS

Drainage trench - This measured approximately 60m in length and was up to 1.2m deep and 0.3m wide. It extended from near the northwest side of the new building to a pond in the field to the northwest (Fig. 2).

The basic stratigraphy comprised up to 0.4m of topsoil overlying natural subsoil. The natural comprised gravel at the northwestern end of the trench and sandy silt at the southeastern end. The gravel deposits were cut by an undated linear feature, orientated northeast - southwest, approximately 4m from the northwestern end. This feature was approximately 4m wide with sloping sides, and filled with orange-brown silt. It was not bottomed by the drainage trench. Several other modern water and drainage pipes were observed cutting the natural subsoils.

Area of agricultural building - The area was covered by a pebble/gravel hardcore. Only the upper part of this deposit (to a depth of 0.12-0.2m) was removed. No features other than modern wall footings were identified.

Foundation stanchions - The 21 foundation stanchions for the agricultural building defined an area approximately 38m x 24m. The long axis of the new building was orientated northwest - southeast (see Fig. 2). The stanchions were approximately 6m apart along the long sides of the building and 4 - 5m apart along the short sides. Each measured 1m x 1m x 1m. A similar stratigraphy was observed in the majority of the stanchion holes. Typically, the gravel natural was overlain by up to 0.3m of subsoil and up to 0.4m of topsoil. An irrigation pipe was observed in a number of the holes on the southeastern side. Occasional traces of a modern brick structure were observed in several of the holes. These were presumably related to the wall footings observed after the initial clearance of the area. There were no indications of pre-nineteenth century activity.

No finds were recovered during the course of the watching brief.

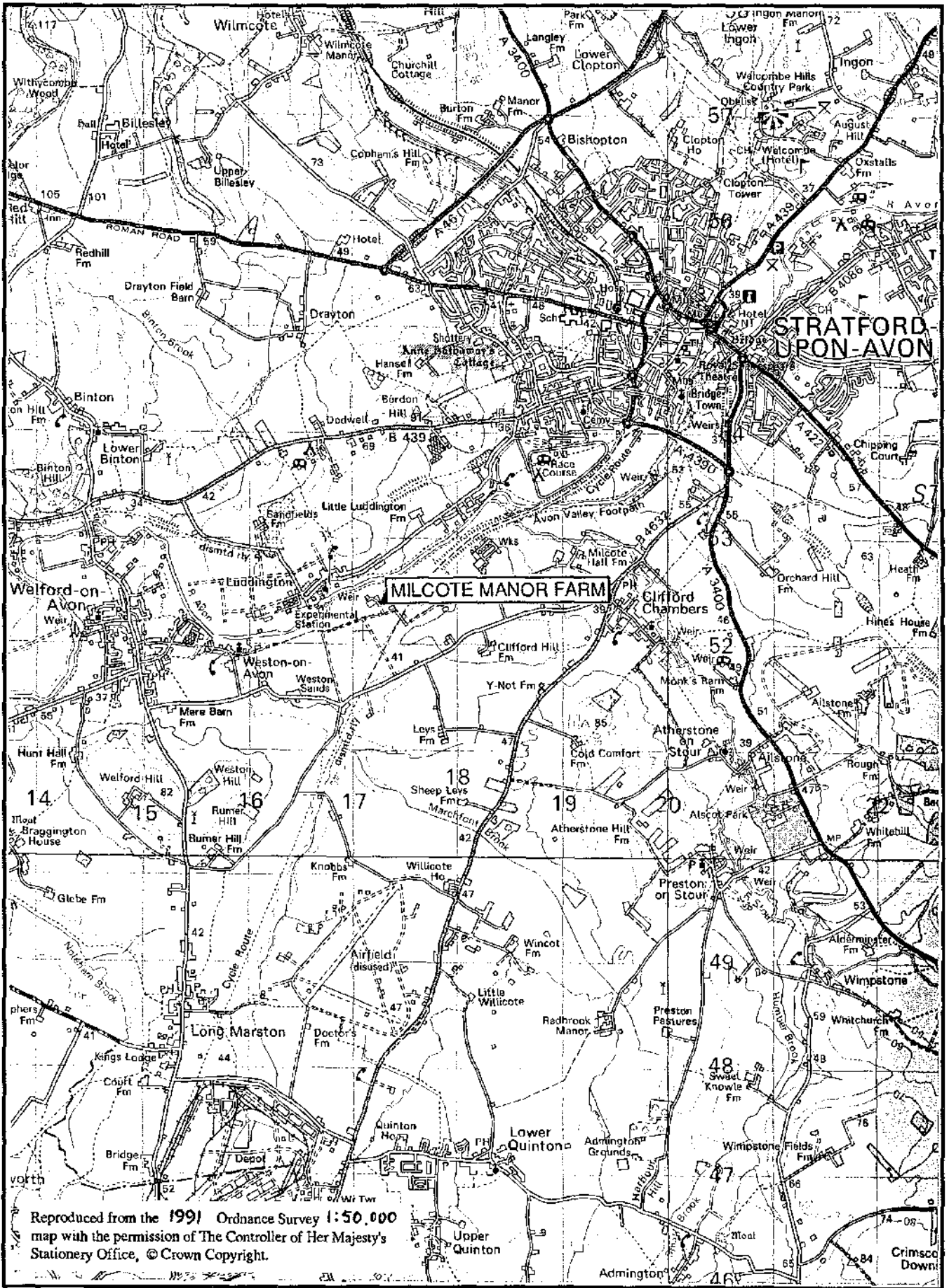
CONCLUSIONS

Despite the extensive indications of archaeological activity in the vicinity of the development, no indications of pre-nineteenth century activity could be identified during the watching brief. The only possible earlier feature was the undated linear ditch recorded near to the northwest end of the drainage trench.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

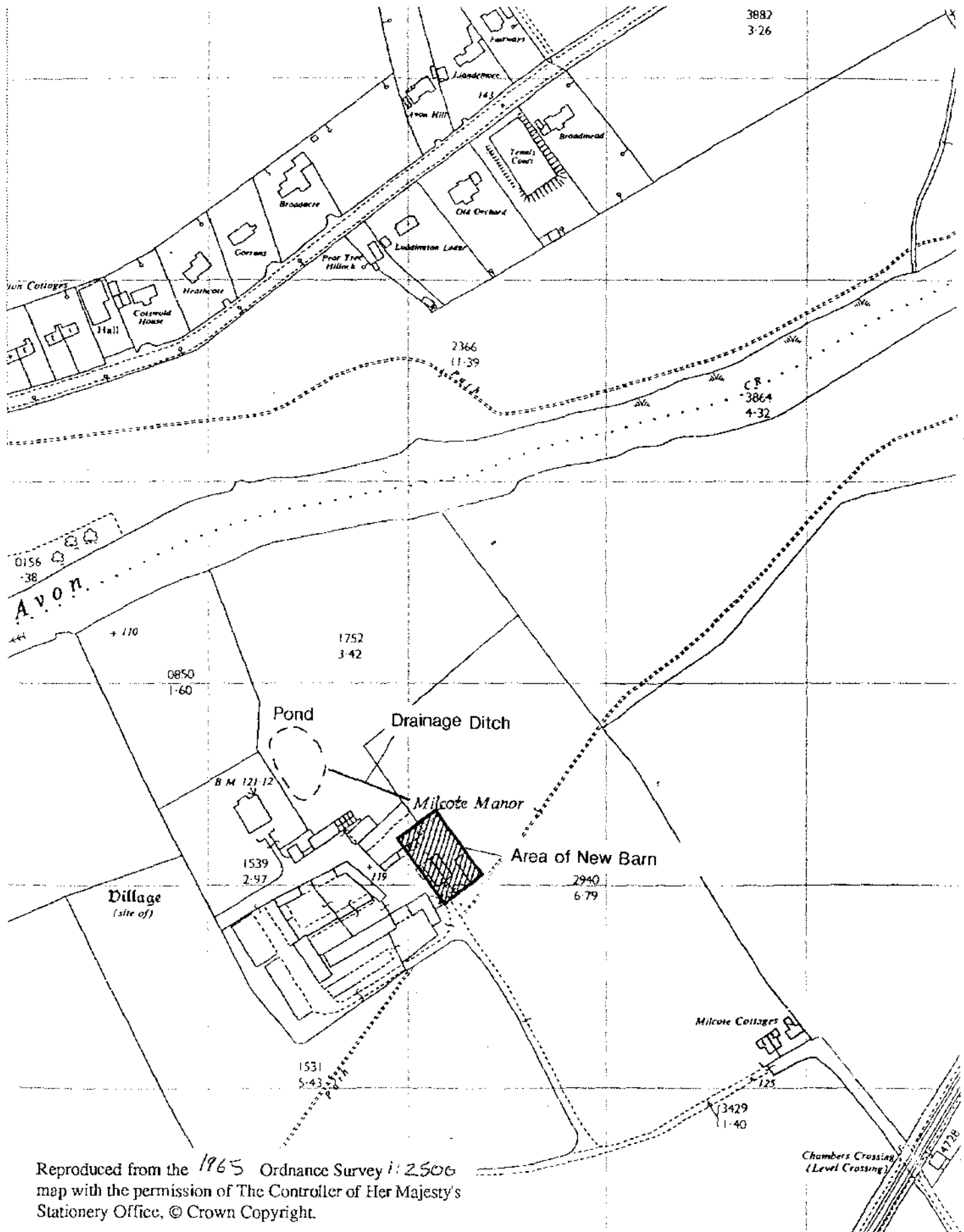
The field work was carried out by Jon Sterenberg and Martin Campbell. The report was prepared by Gwilym Hughes.

Thanks are due to Mr Martin Smith for his cooperation.



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Fig. 1



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Fig. 2