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**MANOR FARM, CASTLE CARY**  
**An assessment of the archaeological potential at Manor Farm, Castle Cary,**  
**Somerset and a scheme for its further evaluation in advance of development**

by  
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## MANOR FARM, CASTLE CARY

### An assessment of the archaeological potential at Manor Farm, Castle Cary, Somerset and a scheme for its evaluation in advance of development

#### 1.0 Introduction

This brief has been prepared as a scheme to investigate the archaeological potential of this development site on behalf of its current owner, Fawcett Construction Ltd. It provides a desk-based assessment of the resource, combined with proposals for a further site evaluation. It is formulated with reference to a *General Specification for Archaeological Work in Somerset* Somerset County Council, March 1995 (SCC 1995); *Management of Archaeological Projects 2*, English Heritage 1991, and in consultation with Mr Chris Webster, Environment Department, Somerset County Council in response to a condition of outline planning consent to develop the site in accordance with a Section 106 Agreement.

#### 2.0 Background

2.1 The development site, comprising over 1.5 ha, was formerly the location of the Manor Farm yards and outbuildings. It occupies a west-facing slope which has been extensively terraced and rises up eastwards, from the Fore Street/Park Street frontage in the centre of the town, towards the site of the castle.

2.2 The property occupies a central position within the historic core area of Castle Cary, a settlement of medieval origin, whose initial development as a town probably owed much to the foundation of a Norman castle. Relatively little is known of the origin of this fortification, or of the early history of the town, though apparently recorded as a settlement in the Domesday survey of 1086. Built late in the 11th or early in the 12th century, two sieges are recorded during Stephen's reign and the castle may have been destroyed after the middle of the 12th century. The prosperity of the small medieval and later town which subsequently developed adjacent to it was based upon cloth production and marketing.

2.3 Topographic study identifies several elements within the historic settlement core (Aston and Lecch 1977, 26-30; Extensive Urban Survey 1998). The church of All Saints may mark the locality for an original agricultural settlement, although there is no certain evidence for pre-Conquest origins. The castle, located strategically on higher ground to the north east, still survives as a series of substantial earthworks representing a keep to the south accompanied by a sub-rectangular outer bailey to the north east. As suggested above, the castle and its lords thereafter were probably instrumental in stimulating the development of the market and town area, centred at the intersection of High Street, Fore Street and Woodcock Street immediately to the north west. A fourth element within the townscape along South Street may also owe its development to the lord of the manor, as a planned later medieval extension to the south west.

2.4 Previous archaeological research and discoveries within Castle Cary have focused almost exclusively upon the castle. Nineteenth century excavations revealed the plan of the Norman keep and its primary relationship to the bailey. Salvage recording in the late 1970s located part of the defensive ditch separating the keep from the bailey, and a limekiln, both within the Manor Farm complex (Aston and Murless 1978; Minnitt and Murless 1979). No other archaeological investigations are recorded from within the town and casual finds provide limited additional information. There is no suggestion of prehistoric or Romano-British settlement at this locality, although in the light of flint artefact discoveries south of Manor Farm (SMR. 53648) such remains cannot be ruled out.

### 3.0 The Site

3.1 Historically, the development site lies wholly within the castle precincts, although largely occupied until very recently by the agricultural buildings of Manor Farm. The farmhouse itself lies to the south, immediately outside the development area; an 18th-century rebuilding of the later medieval manor house which probably replaced the castle as a residence. The earliest cartographic depiction of this building, and of the town itself, is the plan of John Ward, *c* 1670? (Aston and Leech 1977, 26). This plan also appears to show outbuildings to the north and east, some of which may have been medieval in origin. Later maps (e.g. the tithe map of 1841 and the first edition of the Ordnance Survey 1886) show more detail of yards and buildings in this area, all of which were cleared to foundation level, along with later additions, in the autumn of 1998.

3.2 The eastern boundary of the site is currently a steep bank, cut back almost vertically in places. Above this lies the site of the Norman castle, visible as earthworks within pasture and about to be scheduled as an Ancient Monument (SMR. 53640). Their current arrangement, along with discoveries made in the 1970s (Aston and Murless 1978 and Minnitt and Murless 1979), suggest some encroachment by the farm yard upon the site of the keep in particular (SMR. 55464). While it may be anticipated that this has been largely a destructive process, part of the very substantial outer defensive ditch and a bank encountered in 1977 could well survive elsewhere within the site. The discovery nearby of a limekiln in 1978 (SMR. 55465) may relate either to the early castle or development of the farm yard, but both discoveries indicate the potential for the survival of earlier remains or deposits within this area.

3.3 The western boundaries of the development lie adjacent to Fore Street and the Horse Pond, or behind the tenements to the rear of properties fronting onto Fore Street. The latter are almost certainly of medieval origin, and may represent some encroachment upon the original precinct of the castle. There is no evidence for this process within the current development site, and its direct frontage onto Fore Street and the Horse Pond may always have been part of the Manor House grounds and farm. The original access to the castle from the town appears to have been from the market place to the north west and into the outer bailey. However, there is the possibility of another early entrance across the development site, from Fore Street to the west and to the later medieval Manor House at least.

#### 4.0 Archaeological Assessment

4.1 This desk-based assessment suggests some potential for the survival and recovery of archaeological information relating to i) the Norman castle, ii) the environs of its successor the Manor House, and iii) the development of the medieval town. Of lower priority is the potential for surviving remains of earlier periods (Anglo-Saxon, Romano-British or prehistoric).

4.2 Prior to development proceeding there is a requirement for an archaeological investigation of the site as a condition of the Section 106 Agreement, of which this desk-based assessment is a preliminary stage. From this it is apparent that a further stage of investigation is required to evaluate more fully its archaeological potential, and thus to formulate the most appropriate mitigation response to the detailed proposals for development.

4.3 As stated previously, the site lies upon a relatively steep west-facing slope, most of which has been terraced to accommodate a sequence of agricultural buildings belonging to the Manor House/Manor Farm. All of these upstanding remains along with some foundations and surfaces have now been cleared.

4.4 Opportunities for a further archaeological assessment are constrained by the character and current condition of the site. The application of such standard field evaluation techniques as geophysical prospection, fieldwalking or other surface survey is not appropriate. Trial trenching and test pit excavation is therefore recommended as the technique most likely to provide specific and detailed information concerning the survival and character of archaeological structures and deposits.

4.5 Specifications for a site evaluation of this type are set out in the document *General Specification for archaeological work in Somerset*, Somerset County Council March 1995, and will be adhered to in the proposed second stage investigation.

#### 5.0 Evaluation Proposal - Stage 2

5.1 The objectives for Stage 2 will be to define areas where archaeological remains still survive, and to propose mitigation strategies whereby the effects of development proposals upon those remains can be minimised.

5.2 The results should: i) identify and record the nature, date and location of the archaeological remains encountered;  
ii) contribute to knowledge of the history of activity on the site and its locality;  
iii) provide information to influence detailed planning of the development and opportunities for mitigation of its effects upon the archaeological resources.

5.3 A series of five machine cut trenches will be made at selected points across the site in approximately the positions indicated on the accompanying figure. These positions may be subject to some adjustment on the ground in accordance with current site conditions and safety requirements, but will accord as closely as possible with

those indicated. A further series of trial pits are to be excavated by the contractor to assess ground conditions prior to the preparation of detailed plans for the development.

5.4 The five evaluation trenches will be excavated and recorded in accordance with the *General Specification for Archaeological work in Somerset, 1995*. In addition, any remains encountered or recovered from the developer's test pits will be archaeologically recorded as part of a co-ordinated operation, as will any other information revealed by the removal of foundations, etc. on the site, to contribute to the overall site evaluation.

5.5 The archaeological evaluation will be undertaken by the Field Archaeology Unit, University of Birmingham under the direction of Mr. Peter Leach BA, FSA, MIFA., and will employ established recovery and recording methodologies in conformity with the *General Specification, SCC, 1995, Sections 5-8 & 10*. It will utilise specialist services available through the University for palaeoenvironmental remains, pottery and other ceramics, artifacts including coins, metalwork, stone, glass, bone, preserved organic or other materials. Standard health and safety procedures and fully comprehensive insurance will apply to all operations on site.

5.6 At the conclusion of all field investigation and recording a report will be prepared and submitted within three weeks to the client, the planning authority and Somerset County Council. This will document and interpret the findings, assess their significance, and make recommendations as appropriate for further mitigation in the event of development proceeding. Subject to the owner's instruction it is anticipated that ownership and long-term deposition of all archaeological finds and archives from the site will be with the County Museum Service at Taunton.

5.7 This evaluation will be subject to monitoring by the County Archaeological Officer or his representative, and any variations in the agreed procedure must be approved by him before commencement (*General Specification, SCC 1995, Section 4*).

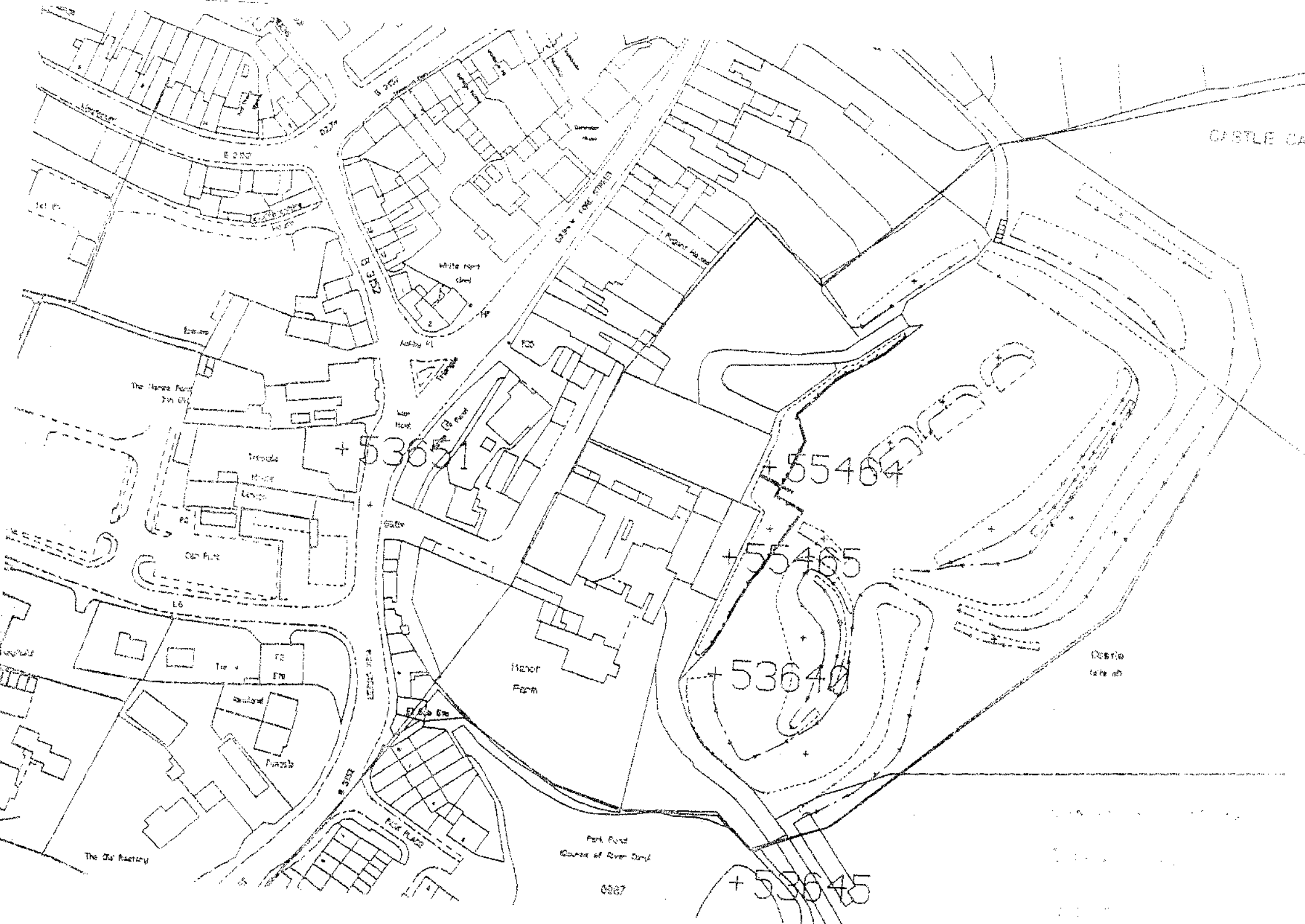
## 6.0 References

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Mimitt S. and Murless B.J. 1979 'Somerset Archaeology 1978' *PSANHS* 123, p.90



CASTLE CA

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The Old Rectory

The Manor Farm

White Hart

Honor Farm

Park Farm  
Course of River Ditch

Castle Gate off

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