

*BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY
FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT*

**An archaeological
evaluation at Arle Court,
Hatherley Lane,
Cheltenham,
Gloucestershire.**

B.U.F.A.U.



Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
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by
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Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Arle Court, Hatherley, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire (NGR SO 9143 2140) between 13-17th September 1999. This followed a desk-based assessment, prepared by Alison Borthwick & Associates on behalf of Cheltenham Studios, addressing the archaeological implications of development. Five trial trenches were excavated to test areas of possible archaeological potential.

No features or deposits of archaeological interest were recorded in any of the trial trenches. No artefacts or environmental samples of archaeological interest were recovered.

Introduction (Figure 1)

The following report details the results of an archaeological evaluation undertaken following the submission of a planning application for a residential development at Arle Court, Hatherley, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire (located at NGR SO 9143 2140, Figure 1). The work was commissioned by David Wilson Homes and was undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit between 13-17th September 1999. The trial trenching followed a desk-based assessment (Borthwick & Chandler 1998). The programme of trial trenching was based on an archaeological specification prepared by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU 1999).

Archaeological background

The site is an irregularly shaped parcel covering an area of approximately 1 hectare. The western portion of the site comprised woodland and a part of the gardens of Arle Court, and the eastern part was in use for car parking and tennis courts.

The present Arle Court is an early 20th century rebuild or modernisation of a house built in the mid 19th century. This house itself replaced an earlier house, in existence in 1828 and possibly built as early as the early 17th century. This earlier house may possibly have succeeded a minor grange held by Llanthony Priory in the mid 12th century. The surrounding land appears to have been one of the open fields of Arle (Borthwick & Chandler 1998).

SMR entries indicate that Romano-British pottery was recovered in a foundation trench at 16 Coberley Road, Benhall, 500m to the northeast of the Arle Court House (SMR No 6657), and that 22 Roman coins were found at 5 Unwin Close, 250m south of the house

(SMR No 6645). Recent fieldwork to the east of the development site has also produced evidence of Romano-British activity (Charles Parry, pers comm).

The archaeological background is described in detail by the desk-based assessment (Borthwick and Chandler, 1998).

Aims

The objective of the programme of trial trenching was to attempt to establish the presence/absence, character, extent, state of preservation and date of any archaeological features or deposits within the development area, and to permit the formulation of a mitigation strategy, if appropriate.

Method

A total of five trenches were excavated, each measuring 25m in length and 1.60m in width. These provided a total sample of approximately 2% of the proposed development area. The trenches were located in order to give the widest possible distribution within the development area. Each of the trenches was located using a Total Station Theodolite and the topsoil / modern overburden was excavated using a mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.60m toothless ditching bucket under archaeological supervision. All trenches and excavated deposits were recorded using pro-forma record cards, supplemented by monochrome photography and by section drawings of each trench at a scale of 1:50.

Results (Figure 2)

No features, layers or artefacts of archaeological interest were encountered. The following results detail all deposits recorded in each of the five trenches.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was located in the northern part of the car park and aligned northwest-southeast. Extensive tree root disturbance was noted towards the western limit of this trench.

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Depth</i>
1001	Modern tarmac	0.05-0.07m
1002	Yellow sand and gravel	0.05-0.15m
1003	Orange gravel	0.15-0.30m
1000	Dark olive green clay with root action	0.05-0.07m
1004	Olive green clay	N/A

Trench 2

Trench 2 was located in the western part of the car park and aligned north-south. Some tree root disturbance was noted at the southern limit of this trench. A modern storm drain was located at the centre of this trench.

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Depth</i>
2000	Modern tarmac	0.05-0.10m
2001	Yellow-orange gravel	0.30-0.40m

2002	Dark olive green clay	0.10-0.15m
2003	Mid grey-green clay	N/A

Trench 3

Trench 3 was located in the wooded area to the west of the car park and aligned east-west. Some tree root action was noted throughout the upper levels of this trench. Two field drains were located in this trench, one at the centre and one towards the northern limit.

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Depth</i>
3000	Turf and topsoil	0.05-0.15m
3001	Hardcore, brick rubble, gravel	0.10-0.30m
3002	Yellow-brown clay	0.30-0.50m
3003	Grey-green clay	N/A

Trench 4

Trench 4 was located at the northern limit of the tennis courts and aligned east-west. A garden water pipe was located at the centre of the trench, and a field drain was located towards the eastern limit of the trench.

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Depth</i>
4000	Asphalt and concrete playing surface	Up to 0.10m
4001	Grey roadstone, yellow gravel, concrete blocks	0.35-0.40m
4002	Dark olive green clay	0.35-0.40m
4003	Yellow green silty clay	N/A

Trench 5

Trench 5 was located at the centre of the tennis courts and aligned north-south. A land drain was located at the southern limit of the trench.

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Depth</i>
5000	Asphalt and concrete playing surface	Up to 0.10m
5001	Grey roadstone and yellow gravel	0.15-0.20m
5002	Dark olive green clay (in northern 8m of trench only)	0.00-0.20m
5003	Yellow green silty clay	N/A

Discussion

The absence of any features or layers of archaeological interest within the trial trenches suggests that the development area has negligible archaeological potential. This may be due to an absence of archaeological activity within the area or due to the truncation of archaeological remains by later activity. It is noted that little or no topsoil was encountered in any of the five trenches, and it is likely that topsoil stripping for the construction of the car park and tennis courts would have truncated any archaeological remains in trenches 1, 2, 4, and 5. A deposit of brick rubble etc. (3001) in trench 3 suggests that this area has also been subject to landscaping in the modern period, once again resulting in the truncation of any archaeological features. The absence of post-medieval or modern pottery within any of the trenches may also be indicative of the recent removal of a pre-existing ground surface.

Acknowledgements

Howell Roberts supervised the fieldwork with the assistance of Ellie Ramsey and Ed Newton. The figures were prepared by John Halstead.

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The project was managed by Lucie Dingwall for BUFAU, and monitored by Charles Parry on behalf of Gloucestershire County Council.

References

Borthwick, A. and Chandler, J. 1998 *Arle Court, Hatherley Lane, Cheltenham: The archaeological and historical implications of development*. Alison Borthwick and Associates, Salisbury, 1998.

BUFAU 1999 *Archaeological Specification: Field Evaluation: Land at Arle Court, Hatherley Lane, Cheltenham*. Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit, 1999.

List of figures

Figure 1 – Location of site

Figure 2 – The study area showing location of trial trenches.

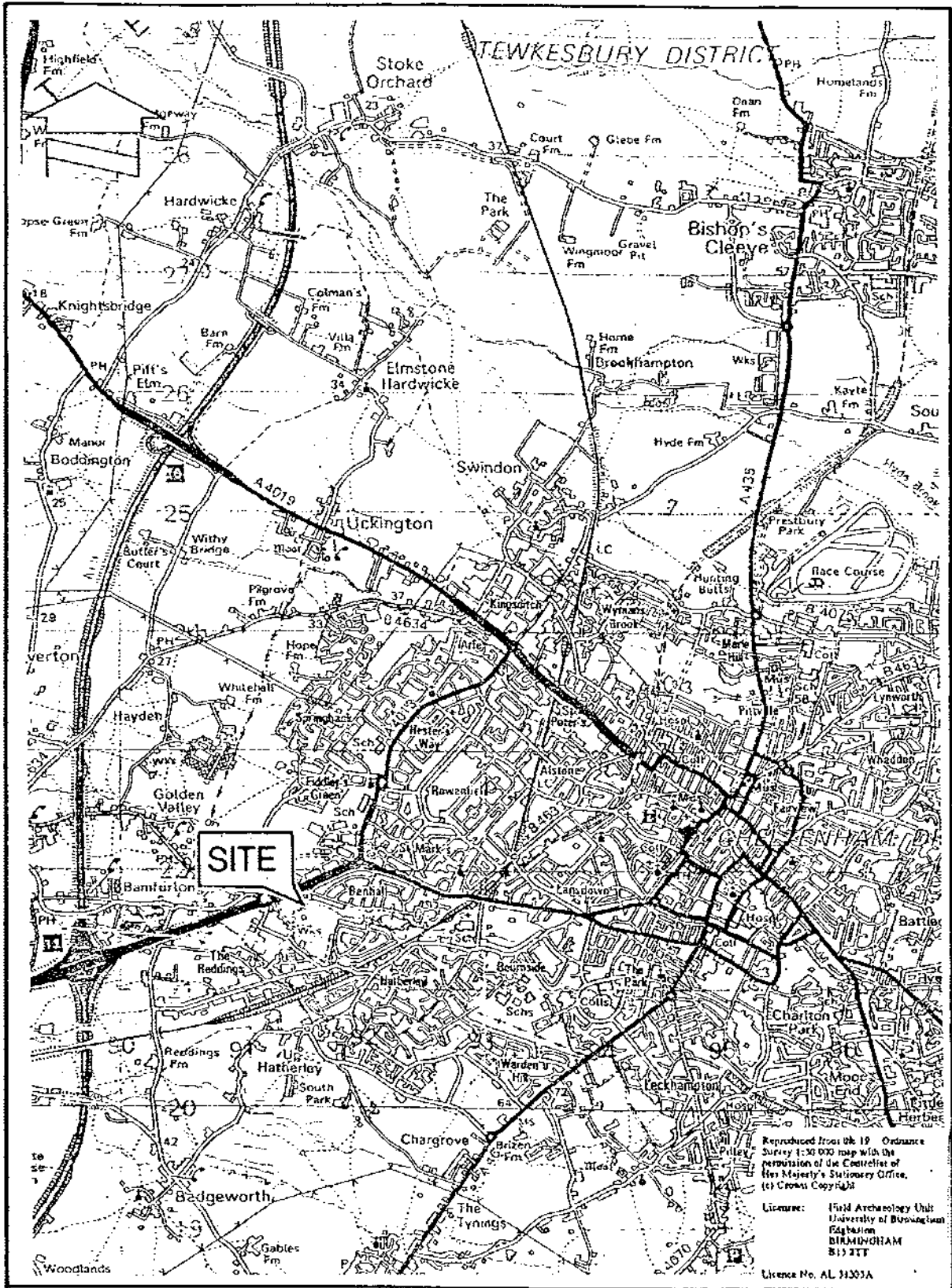


Fig 1

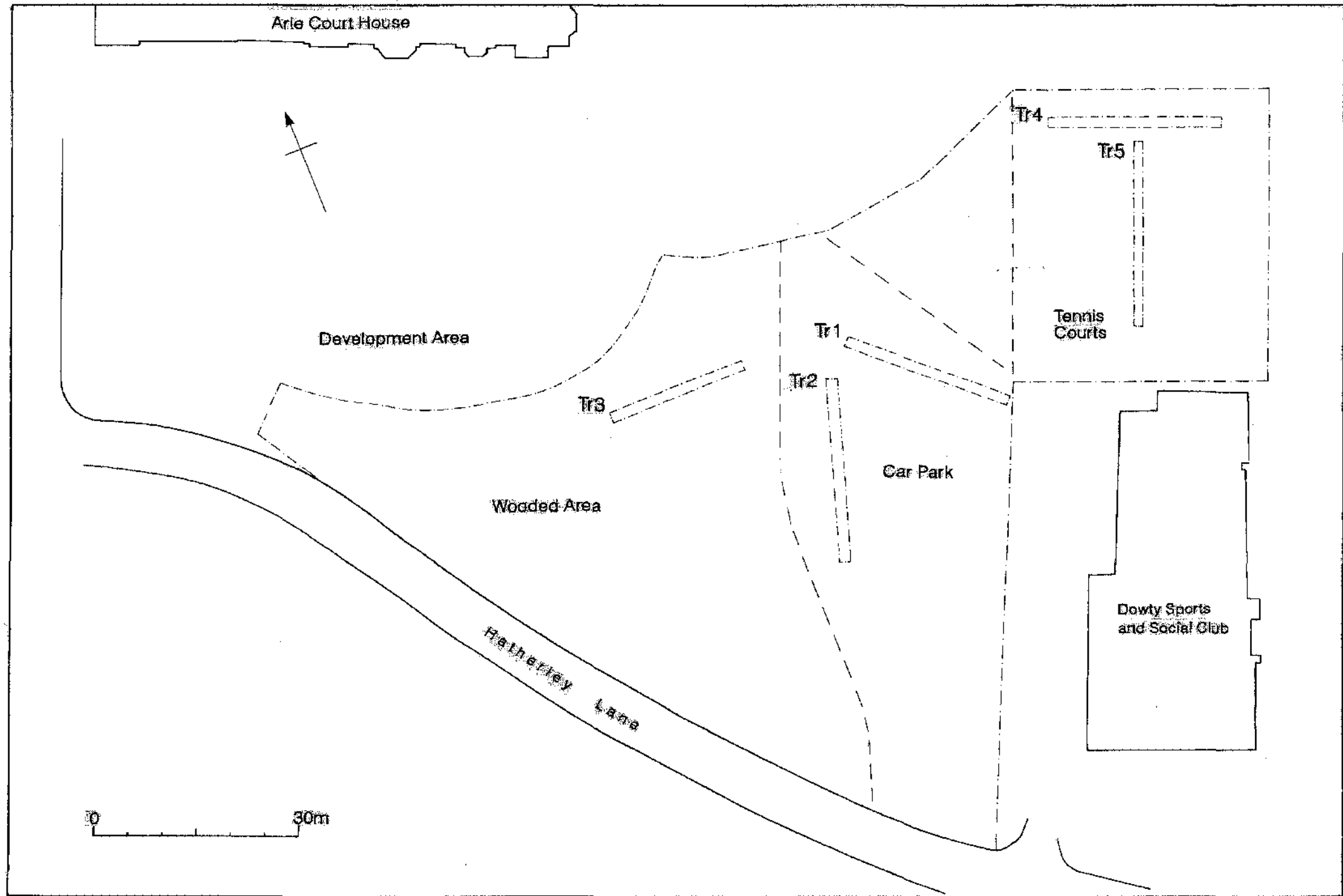


Fig. 2