



THE UNIVERSITY
OF BIRMINGHAM

**The Manor, Hollycroft
Crescent, Hinckley,
Leicestershire:
An Archaeological
Watching Brief**

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit



Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
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**The Manor, Hollycroft Crescent, Hinckley Leicestershire:
An Archaeological Watching Brief**

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Contents

	Page
Summary	1
1.0 Introduction	1
2.0 Site Location and Description	1
3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background	2
4.0 Aims	2
5.0 Method	2
6.0 Results	3
7.0 Discussion	4
8.0 Acknowledgements	4
9.0 References	4

List of Figures

Fig 1. General Site Location

Fig 2. The Area of Watching Brief

List of Plates

Plate 1 - Shot looking north-east along foundation trench

Plate 2 - South-east facing section of foundation trench

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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit in 2002 at The Manor Public House off Hollycroft Crescent, Hinckley, Leicestershire (NGR SP 4230 9440). The watching brief was undertaken on behalf of Fairclough Homes Ltd, and was required by Leicestershire County Council as part of an application for planning consent for a residential development. The site had previously been the subject of a desk-based assessment (Watt 2001) and an archaeological evaluation (Jones 2001), which indicated that the site was potentially part of a rich prehistoric landscape. No archaeological features or artefacts were found during the watching brief.

1.0 Introduction

This report details the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit in 2002, on a site at the Manor Public House, off Hollycroft Crescent, Hinckley, Leicestershire (Fig. 1). The watching brief was carried out on behalf of Fairclough Homes Ltd as part of a planning consent for the residential development of the site. Both a desktop assessment (Watt 2001) and an archaeological evaluation (Jones 2001) were carried out prior to the start of the development. The guidelines set down in the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1999) were followed.

The site lies within an area that may potentially provide evidence for prehistoric activity and, although no specific features were identified during previous work, prehistoric artefacts have been recovered from the site.

2.0 Site Location and Description

The site is located off Hollycroft Crescent, about 1km to the north-west of Hinckley town centre in the south-west of Leicestershire (SP 4230 9440). The site (Fig. 2) is irregular in shape, bordered by Hollycroft Crescent to the south-west, residential development and allotments to the west, and residential development to the north and east. It is situated on an area of high ground. The highest point on the site is 121m AOD sloping down to the south to 114m AOD.

The solid geology comprises Triassic rocks concealed by drift deposits, including Polesworth and Bromsgrove Sandstone formations, and Mercia Mudstone. The glacial drift comprises clays, sand and gravels. The post-glacial drift includes First River Terrace deposits and alluvium. The river terrace deposits comprise clayey gravel with flint and Bunter quartzite pebbles (British Geological Survey 1990).

3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

The desk-based assessment (Watt 2001) carried out prior to the evaluation gives the detailed archaeological and historical background, and only a summary is provided here. No evidence of prehistoric activity was found within the site itself. The assessment found that the site lies within a landscape rich in prehistoric activity, including many finds of Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age date and, together with its location on topographically and geologically favourable ground, it was considered that, although parts of the site have been disturbed, the potential for the existence of buried remains of prehistoric date was relatively high.

The site is on an area of high ground, and this topographical advantage, together with its geology of sand and gravel, makes it similar to other local areas, particularly to the south and west, where evidence of Palaeolithic activity has been discovered. The gravel contains flint, making it rich in material for the manufacture of implements in prehistoric times.

Evidence of Palaeolithic activity has been found close to the site, near Hollycroft Park, just to the south-east of the site. Here a peat bed contained prehistoric oak and birch, auroch bones, worked flint and a pot boiler. More auroch bones were found near Granville Road less than 1km south of the site. Other finds dating from the Palaeolithic period have been found in surrounding villages and towns, including Burbage to the south-east, and the hamlet of Wykin to the north-west; these finds have included hand-axes, scrapers and choppers.

In 2001 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken of the development site (Jones 2001). No significant archaeological features or deposits were located during the evaluation. Evidence for the earliest activity at the site was demonstrated by the finds of flint artefacts comprising a blade fragment and two small multi-platform cores, probably of early Neolithic date.

4.0 Aims

All below ground works were to be monitored by BUFAU. This was to include the stripping of topsoil, the down cutting of existing levels and the excavations for both foundations and services. All archaeological features and deposits revealed by the contractors groundworks were to be recorded and any artefacts to be recovered in order to assess the location, extent, date, character and condition and significance of any surviving archaeological remains.

5.0 Method

The drainage and foundation trenches were excavated with a 360° mechanical excavator. A complex of foundation trenches was excavated in the south-eastern area (Area 1), which had formally been occupied by the car park to The Manor Public House. Along the access road to the site a series of trenches were excavated in order to install manholes and storm drainage. All stratigraphic sequences were also to be

recorded whether or not archaeology was present. This information was to be supplemented with scale drawings, plans, sections and a photographic record. These records comprise the site archive, which is stored at Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit.

6.0 Results (Plates 1 and 2)

Area 1

The foundation trenches in this area were very shallow, the deepest being not more than 1m deep. The shallowest part of the trenches was located along the north-east edge; these measured only 0.37m in depth. The earliest deposit seen in section was a sand layer (1002) recorded at a depth of 0.10m below the modern ground surface. This was overlain by a dark brown silt-sand layer containing some rubble fragments (1001). The latest deposit was the tarmac surface of the car park (1000).

Throughout the complex of foundation trenches, the stratigraphic matrix remained the same, although the depth of the trenches varied. With the exception of rubble fragments, the layers seen in section contained no dateable finds. All of the layers seen during the excavation of the foundation trenches were seen to be modern.

Area 2

These trenches were located at the north-east end of the access road leading onto the site, with Area 2 to the south-east. The trenches measured 8m in length and 3m in width and were excavated to a depth of 2.10m.

The earliest deposit seen in the trenches was recorded at 0.3m below the modern ground surface and was composed of a brownish orange clay-sand (2002). Immediately above this layer was an dark brown sand-silt layer similar to (1001). In a south-east facing section an electrical cable housed within plastic casing could be seen to cut through this layer and to obliquely cross the trench. No features of archaeological interest were seen within this area.

Area 3

A trench (Trench 1) was located at the southernmost end of the access road leading onto site. The trench was 10m long, 3m wide with a maximum depth of 0.5m. The earliest deposit seen in this trench was a sand layer, which immediately underlay a layer of brick rubble (3002). Above this layer was a shallow layer of hardcore (3001) covered by a tarmac surface (3000). At the south-eastern end of the trench a partial herringbone pattern of bricks could be seen in section beneath (3001). This suggests that prior to the installation of the tarmac layer, the access to the site had been of brick-paved. Nothing with archaeological potential was seen within this trench.

Another trench (Trench 2) measured 13m in length and 3m in width; its maximum depth was 0.5m. This trench was located immediately to the north-east of Trench 1. The stratigraphy seen in section was the same as that in Trench 1. Nothing of archaeological interest was seen within this trench.

Trench 3 measured 91m in length, 1.50m in width, with a maximum depth of 1.80m. The trench was located almost immediately parallel with the road fronting the site, to the west of the site access. A built up area of garden at the frontage to the site was removed prior to the excavation of the trench. The topsoil accounted for 0.3m of the depth and the mixed root-disturbed subsoil for 0.85m; immediately below the subsoil was a clean orange natural sand. A small amount of root disturbance was seen at a slightly increased depth, but nothing was seen in section to suggest the presence of any archaeological features.

A series of foundation trenches was located near to the southern corner of the site. The deepest section measured 1.25m, in the far north-west corner of the foundation trench complex. This section showed that the tree root disturbance, seen throughout the trenches, reached at least 1m in depth. The trench width was 0.80m and the depth ranged from 0.67m up to 1.25m. All of the sections observed showed the same general stratigraphy, with a layer of root disturbed topsoil and subsoil overlying orange sandy natural. Nothing of archaeological interest was observed during these excavations.

7.0 Discussion

No features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed during the groundworks in any part of the development area monitored during the watching brief. Investigations into further groundworks were hindered by a prolonged period of flooding and revealed no archaeological deposits or features.

8.0 Acknowledgements

This report was written by Kate Bain and Charlotte Neilson and edited by Simon Buteux. Work on site was carried out by Emma Hancox, Kate Bain and Malcolm Hislop. The figures were prepared by Nigel Dodds and John Halsted. Thanks are due to Richard Harper of Fairclough Homes Ltd.

9.0 References

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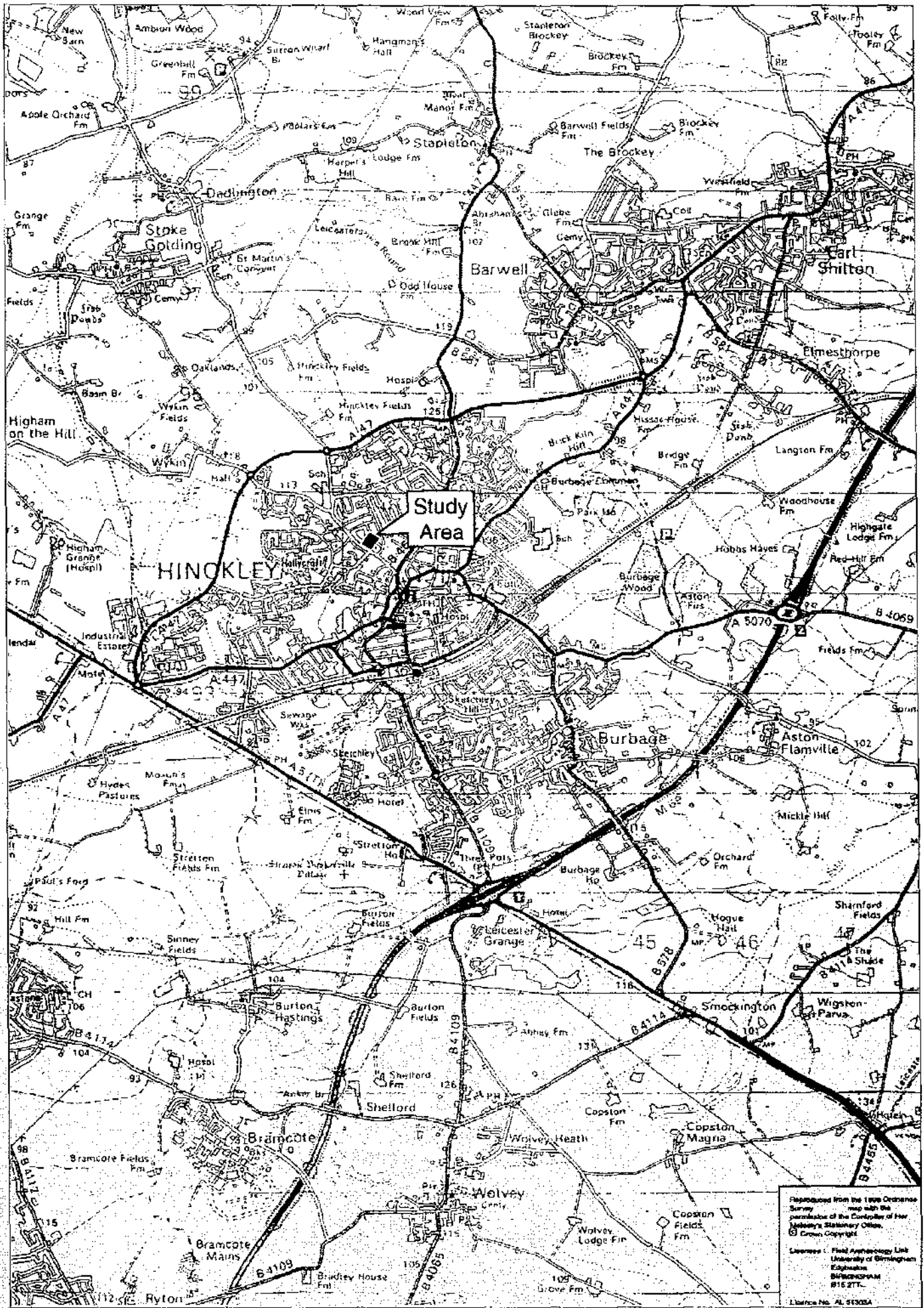


Fig 1

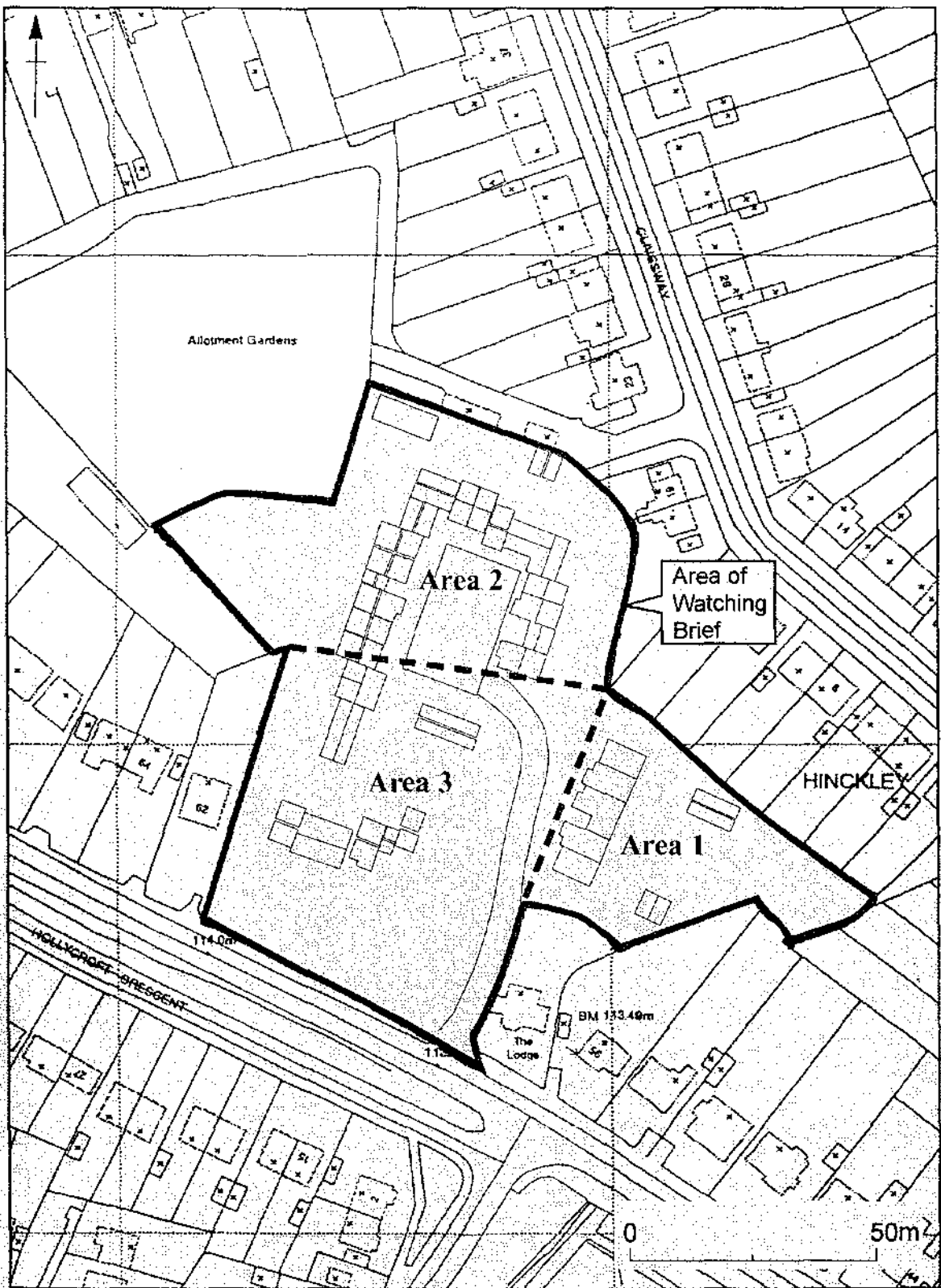


Fig. 2



Plate 1.



Plate 2.