

*BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY  
FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT*

**An archaeological evaluation  
of  
land adjacent to Pumphouse Lane,  
Webheath, Redditch  
1997**

**(HWCM 21776)**

*B.U.F.A.U.*



Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit  
Project No. 459.01  
June 1997

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(HWCM 21776)

by  
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### **1.0 Summary**

An archaeological assessment, comprising a walkover survey of two fields (HWCM 21776 and HWCM 21777: Area A) adjacent to Pumphouse Lane, Webheath, and an SMR consultation, was carried out on 3rd February 1997. The walkover survey identified ridge and furrow, a number of pond-features, former field boundaries and a possible hollow-way, which were thought likely to form part of the medieval landscape. During subsequent evaluation by trial-trenching HWCM 21776 (the site) was sampled; HWCM 21777 was not accessible. Evaluation in HWCM 21776 dated the ridge and furrow, a pond and possible hearth to the post-medieval period, rather than to the medieval period as was previously thought.

### **2.0 Introduction**

This report describes the results of an archaeological evaluation of land adjacent to Pumphouse Lane, Webheath, Redditch. The work was undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit on behalf of David Wilson Homes to provide further archaeological information in advance of proposed development of the site. The archaeological evaluation was conducted in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Standard and guidance for field evaluation* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1994), a brief prepared by Hereford and Worcester County Council (Atkin 1997) and a specification prepared by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (Mould 1997a). This evaluation followed the requirements of Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (Department of Environment 1991).

### **3.0 The site and its location (Figures 1 and 2)**

The site comprises a pasture field (HWCM 21776), 8.76 acres in extent, which is located on the northern side of Pumphouse Lane, and immediately to the west of Pumphouse Farm (NGR SP 015665). The site shares a northern boundary with Barn Hill field and Moor Meadow.

The site, whose underlying geology comprises a mixture of Jurassic red-brown mudstone of the Mercian mudstone group and boulder clay (Cook 1995), lies within an area of known archaeological context. A Stage 1 assessment provided a detailed account of the archaeological background and identified a number of areas of archaeological interest, including ridge and furrow, field boundaries and a hollow-way, all of which are thought to represent a surviving medieval rural landscape (Cook 1995, Mould 1997b). An extract from the assessment, which describes HWCM 21776, is included below as Section 4.0.

#### **4.0 Stage 1 assessment of the site (HWCM 21776)**

This field had been sub-divided into three smaller fields by wooden post and wire fences. The southwestern field had a pond-like feature in the southwestern corner and a possible hollow-way, which ran parallel with Pumphouse Lane, and continued northeast to HWCM 21777. Both features were recorded in the first phase of Stage 1 assessment (Cook 1995). The possible hollow-way was represented by a gentle, north-south, slope in the ground level, which began approximately 6m north of the present field boundary. A shallow, water-carrying ditch was recorded at the base of the slope.

The ground level in this field rose gently from south to north. Ridge and furrow, aligned roughly east-west, survived as earthworks within the southern two-thirds of the field, whilst in the northern one-third, where the ground levelled out, the ridge and furrow was sparser and more widely spaced.

The ground level in the northwestern field banked steeply down from south to north, and ridge and furrow, which survived as earthworks, followed this alignment. The ridge and furrow appeared to respect the southern field boundary, and it seems likely that the present wooden post and wire fence follows the line of a much earlier field division. Two ridge and furrow earthworks, aligned northwest-southeast, were recorded 12m from the northern field boundary, and continued their alignment to the southeast and into the northeastern field.

In addition to the two northwest-southeast aligned ridge and furrow earthworks, the northeastern field contained a number of less well-defined ridge and furrow earthworks, running northeast-southwest. They appeared to be truncated by a pond/pit-like feature which extended east into the adjacent field (HWCM 21777). Ridge and furrow earthworks, aligned roughly north-south, were recorded in the southern half of the field, and were truncated by a modern farm access which continued to the east. The possible hollow-way, recorded in the southwestern field, continued its northeast alignment through this field.

#### **5.0 Objective**

The objective of this archaeological evaluation was to determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains liable to be affected by the proposed development.

## 6.0 Method

A total of six trial trenches was excavated. A JCB excavator was used to remove the topsoil overburden to the top of any significant archaeological features and deposits, or to the top of the subsoil, in the trial trenches. Trenches 1, 2 and 4 were spaced randomly to test the site as widely as possible, whilst Trenches 3, 5 and 6 were placed with the objective of transecting a number of earthwork features which had been identified by the Stage 1 assessment. Trench 5 was split into two (Trenches 5A and 5B) in order to avoid disturbance to recently erected fencing.

All stratigraphic sequences were recorded, even where no archaeology was present, and contextual information was supplemented by scale drawings, plans, sections and photographs which, together with recovered artefacts, form the site archive. This is presently housed at Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit.

## 7.0 The archaeological results (Figure 3)

### Trench 1

(1.50m x 25m, aligned northwest-southeast, excavated to a depth of 131.13m AOD).

The subsoil comprised bands of manganese-flecked, light yellow sand with red-brown gravel-clay (1003). This was overlain by 0.25-0.35m of slightly stony, orange-brown silty sand (1001/1002) which was sealed by 0.15-0.25m of topsoil (1000). The varying depth of topsoil represented ridge and furrow earthworks. No other archaeological features were identified in this trench.

*Artefacts:*

1000	1 fragment of brick.
	1 piece of charcoal.
1001	1 fragment of tile.
	2 fragments of brick.

### Trench 2

(1.50m x 24m, aligned northeast-southwest, excavated to a depth of 136.25m AOD).

In Trench 2, the subsoil comprised bands of a manganese-flecked, yellow/orange sand, with deep red-brown sandy clay (2002/2003). Some grey-white veining was recorded. The subsoil was overlain by 0.40-0.50m of orange-brown gravel-sand (2001), which appeared slightly compacted in places, and contained lumps of manganese. This layer was sealed by 0.20-0.30m of topsoil (2000), which again represented ridge and furrow earthworks. No other archaeological features were identified in this trench.

*Artefacts:* 2000 2 sherds of brown-glazed post-medieval pottery.

### Trench 3

(1.50m x 25m, aligned east-west, excavated to a depth of 135.94m AOD).

Four features were identified, all of which cut the orange clay-sand subsoil (3004). At the eastern end of the trench, a sub-rounded feature (F300) with steeply sloped sides and a flat base was recorded. The cut of F300 was partially filled with sub-rounded stones which were overlain by a charcoal-flecked grey-brown, clayey, silt-sand (3003), which included patches of light grey and under-fired orange clay. This later fill (3003) contained part of a clamped brick with traces of slag encrusted onto one surface. A 0.20m deep layer of brown-orange silty sand-clay (3002) sealed feature F300. Further to the west, a series of three natural features (F301-F303) was recorded. All three were shallow, irregular in plan, and filled with a grey silty sand (3005-3007).

A 0.15m deep grey-brown silt-sand (3001) overlay the subsoil (3004) and sealed F301-F303. It was overlain by 0.15-0.25m of topsoil (3000) which, in the western half of the trench represented ridge and furrow earthworks. The depth of topsoil in the eastern half of the trench was significantly less, and this corresponded with the drop in ground level recorded by the earlier walkover survey (Mould 1997b).

*Artefacts:* F300 2 fragments of brick.  
1 piece of fired clay.

### Trench 4

(1.50m x 28m, aligned northwest-southeast, excavated to a depth of 136.26m AOD).

Four natural features were identified (F400-F403), all of which cut the mixed, red-brown gravel-sand (4002), and red-brown sand-clay (4003) subsoil. As in Trench 3, they were shallow, irregular in plan, and filled with a grey silty sand (4005-4008). A linear feature, initially seen as a thin band of red-brown clay (4004), proved to be a natural lens of clay within the subsoil horizon. All features were sealed by 0.40-0.60m of stony, yellow-brown clayey-sand (4001). This was sealed by 0.15-0.30m of topsoil (4000), which represented ridge and furrow earthworks. No archaeological features were identified in this trench.

*Artefacts:* 4000 2 fragments of tile.  
4 fragments of brick.  
1 fragment of animal bone.

### Trench 5A

(1.50m x 3.50m, aligned southwest-northeast, excavated to a depth of 137.32m AOD).

The subsoil comprised red-brown stony clay (5012). It was partially overlain by a layer of yellow-brown silty clay-sand (5011) whose depth decreased from southwest to northeast. In contrast, the depth of topsoil (5010) increased from southwest to northeast, and directly overlain the subsoil at the northeast end of the trench. No ridge and furrow earthworks or archaeological features were recorded, and no artefacts were recovered from this trench.



### Trench 5B

(1.50m x 36m, aligned southwest-northeast, excavated to a depth of 137.63m AOD).

The subsoil comprised bands of red-brown sandy clay and orange-red sand (5002). It was overlain by 0.60m of yellow-brown silty clay-sand (5001), which was sealed by 0.15-0.20m of topsoil (5000). The varying depth of topsoil in the southwestern three-quarters represented ridge and furrow earthworks. In contrast, the depth of topsoil in the northeastern quarter was more constant. No archaeological features were recorded, and no artefacts were recovered from this trench.

### Trench 6

(1.50m x 25m, aligned approximately north-south, excavated to a depth of 132.37m AOD).

In the northernmost 10m of this trench, the red-brown clay subsoil (6003) was overlain by a light brown, sandy clay-silt (6002). From that point up to the southernmost 2.5m of the trench, the subsoil (6003) was directly overlain by a thin layer of topsoil (6000). At the southern end of the trench, the subsoil was overlain by a light brown, gleyed clay (6001). This was, in turn, overlain by 0.15m of topsoil (6000). No archaeological features were identified in this trench.

*Artefact:* 6002 1 fragment of tile.

## **8.0 Discussion of the archaeological results**

No medieval or earlier remains or artefacts were recorded.

Seven features, three in Trench 3 (F301-F303) and four in Trench 4 (F400-F403) are identified as former tree-root holes, perhaps representing an earlier land division or boundary. The relative scarcity of such features suggests that the site was part of an open, rather than a wooded, landscape prior to agricultural use. This use, represented by ridge and furrow earthworks, had originally been attributed to the medieval period (Cook 1995, Mould 1997b). However, the absence of medieval artefacts and the recovery of a small assemblage of post-medieval artefacts from the topsoil could suggest that the ridge and furrow earthworks may be dated to the post-medieval period.

A linear depression in the ground-surface running parallel with Pumphouse Lane, recorded in Trench 5A was originally thought to represent a hollow-way (Cook 1995). However, the absence of any cut, levelling material for a surface, or post-use silting-up deposits, suggests that it may, instead, be associated with the ridge and furrow immediately to the north. Perhaps it may represent a negative lynchet.

Two pit-like features post-date the ridge and furrow. In Trench 3, one half of a circular depression in the ground level corresponded with a reduction in the depth of topsoil and with a truncation of ridge and furrow. A sub-rounded feature at the base of this circular depression (F300) may represent the remains of a hearth. The recovery of a clamped brick from its fill suggests a date of early 19th century. The presence of slag may suggest small-scale metalworking activity in the area, possibly associated with Pumphouse Farm to the east.

The second pit-like feature, transected by Trench 6, also truncated the ridge and furrow earthworks. The gleyed appearance of the clay deposits and subsoil here is caused by water retention, which suggests the presence of a former pond in this area.

## **9.0 Assessment of the archaeological importance of the site**

Prior to trial-trenching, it was thought that the main period of activity, represented by earthworks, was dated to the medieval period, with some later activity in the post-medieval period. Surviving earthworks were interpreted as the possible remains of a medieval rural landscape. However, evaluation has clarified our understanding of this rural landscape. The scarcity of trees and root-holes suggests that the site was open land in the medieval period, perhaps being used as grazing pasture. No artefacts dating to the medieval period were recorded, and instead, it is more probable that the agricultural remains belong to the post-medieval period, possibly following the establishment of a pumphouse and the subsequent development of Pumphouse Farm.

## **10.0 Implications and Proposal**

### **10.1 Implications**

The evaluation of HWCM 21776 has identified agricultural earthworks which are dated to the post-medieval period. No deposits or features relating to an earlier settlement were sealed beneath the ridge and furrow. The relatively recent date of surviving earthworks does not merit further archaeological investigation and, following this evaluation, archaeological implications for the proposed development of the site would appear to be minimal. It is recommended that no further archaeological mitigation be suggested for this site.

One part of the Stage 1 assessment Area A (HWCM 21777) has not yet been evaluated. Although no medieval deposits or features were recorded during the evaluation of HWCM 21776, the below-ground potential of HWCM 21777 remains untested and it is, therefore, proposed that an archaeological evaluation, at a smaller-scale than that originally suggested (Mould 1997a), be conducted in this field prior to any proposed development.

### **10.2 Proposal (Figure 4)**

The proposal below provides an outline of mitigation fieldwork in HWCM 21777 which could be required if the proposed residential development is approved. The precise nature of such mitigation would need to be approved by Hereford and Worcester County Council.

It is proposed that provision be made for an archaeological evaluation of HWCM 21777 prior to the proposed development. This will involve the excavation of three trial-trenches (Figure 5) which will target earthworks identified by the Stage 1 Assessment (Cook 1995, Mould 1997b). The evaluation will test the potential survival of below-ground archaeological deposits in this area, in a similar manner to the trial-trenching reported upon in this report.

## 11.0 References

- Atkin, M. 1997 *Brief for an archaeological evaluation at land adjacent to Pumphouse Lane, Church Road, Webheath, Redditch.*
- Cook, M. 1995 *Evaluation at Norgrove, Church Road, Redditch (Stage 1).* Hereford and Worcester County Archaeology Service Internal Report 286.
- Mould, C.A. 1997a *Archaeological Specification: Archaeological Evaluation at Land adjacent to Pumphouse Lane, Webheath, Redditch.*
- Mould, C.A. 1997b *An archaeological assessment of land adjacent to Pumphouse Lane, Webheath, Redditch, 1997.* BUFAU Report No. 459.

## 12.0 Acknowledgements

The project was sponsored by David Wilson Homes, and we are grateful to Ian Dubber for his assistance. Thanks also to Malcolm Atkin, Hereford and Worcester County Archaeology Service, for his advice, and patience. The evaluation was undertaken by Catharine Mould; with the assistance of Bob Burrows and Derek Moscrop. Alex Jones edited this report.

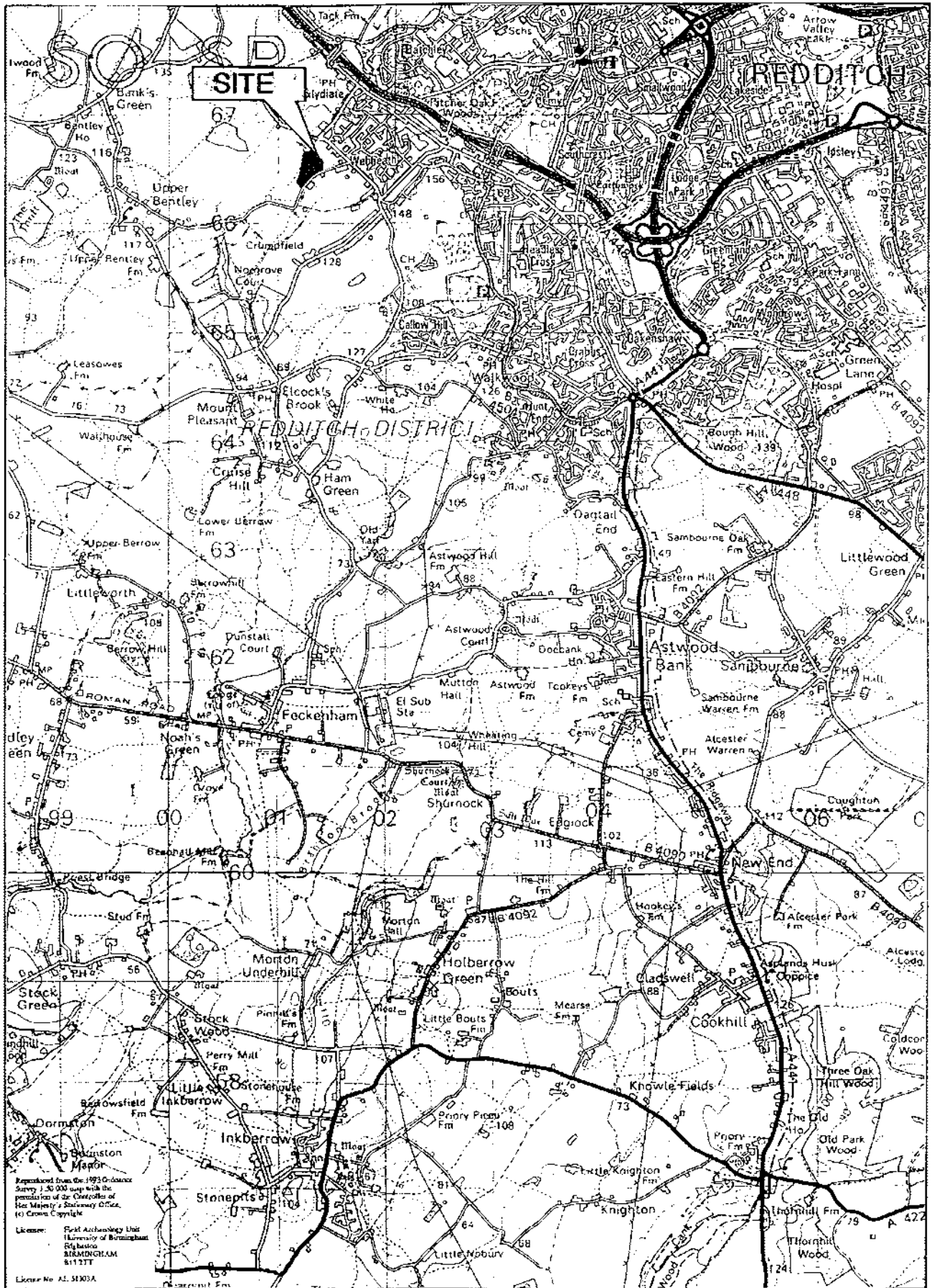
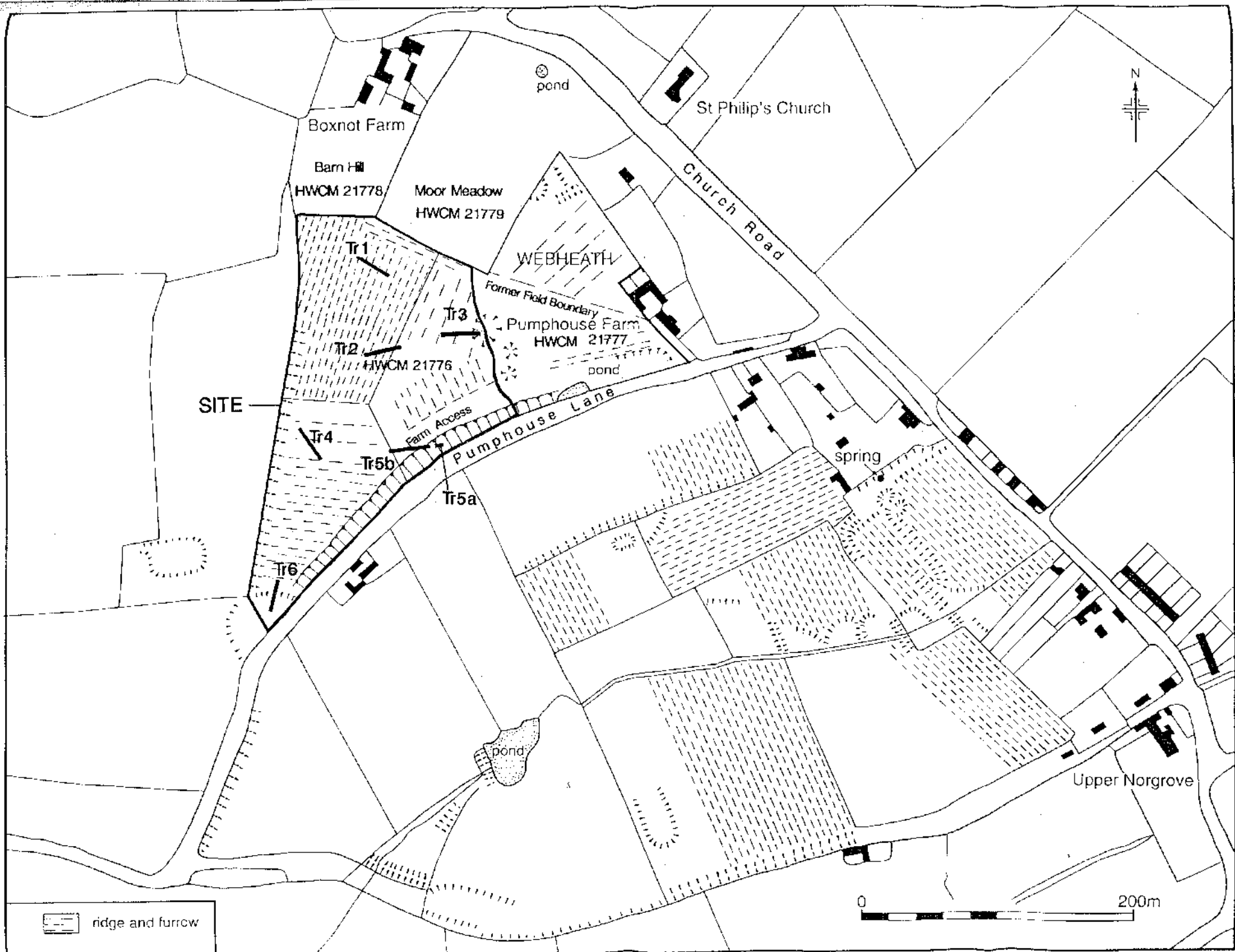


Fig.1



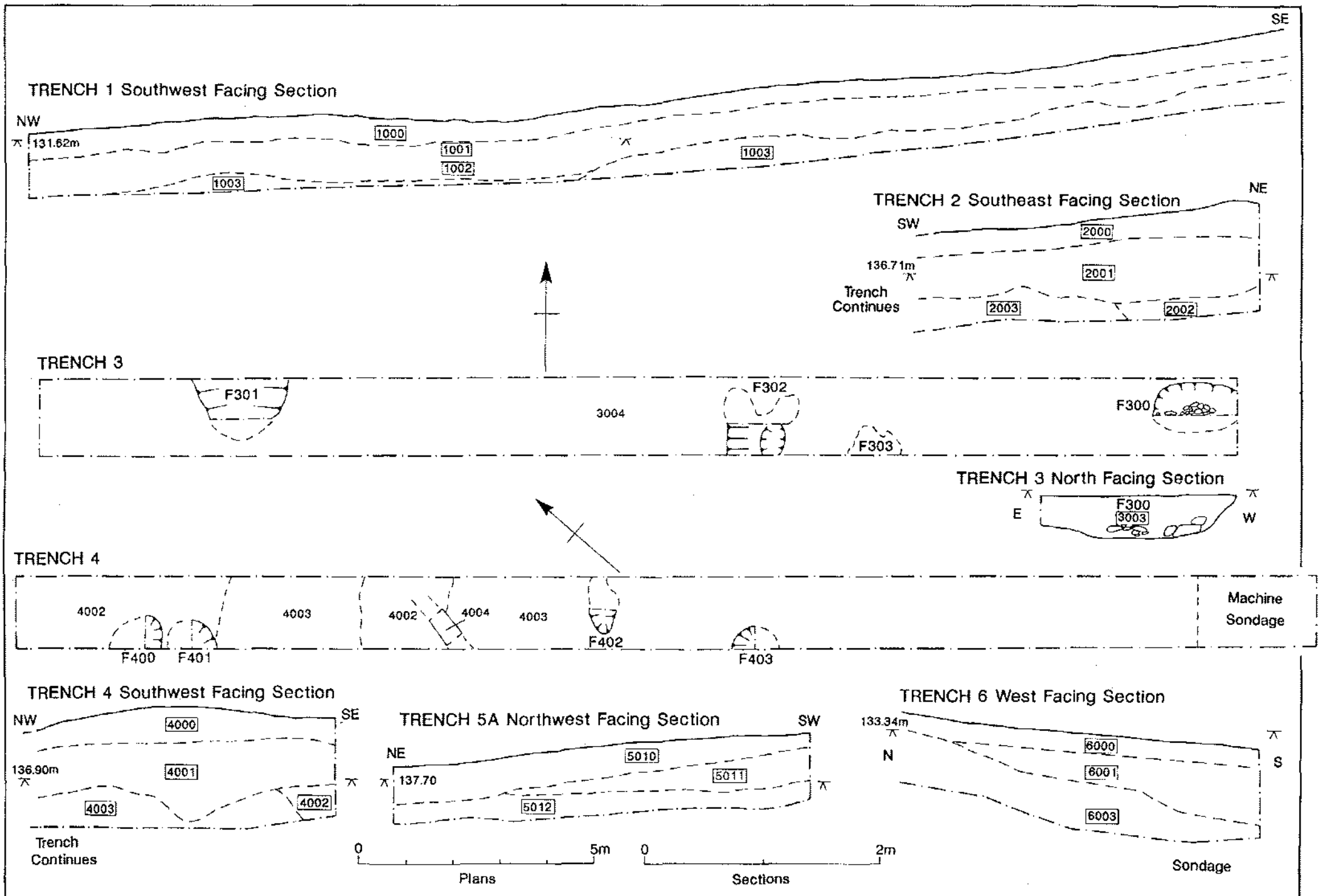


Fig.3

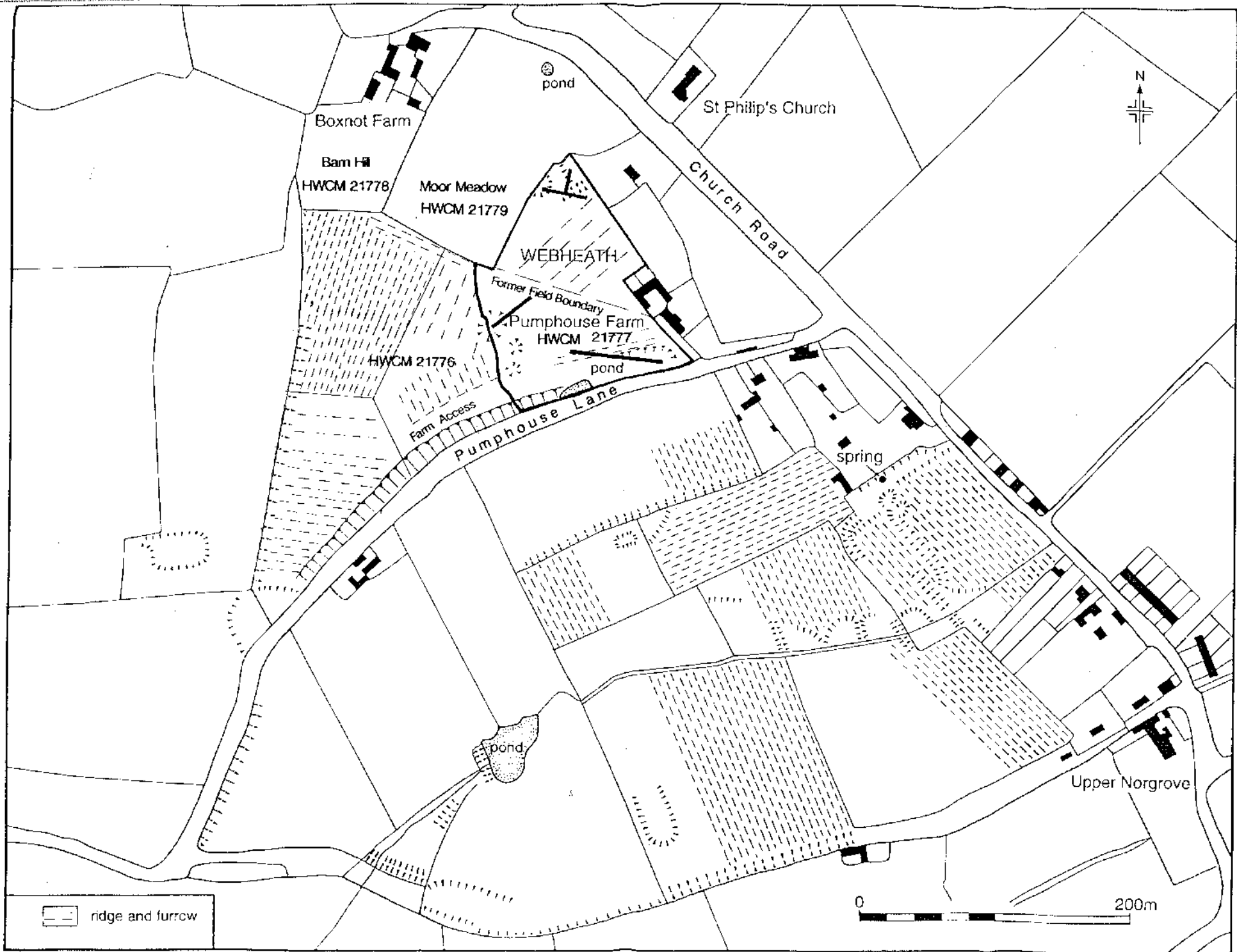


Fig.4