

*BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY
FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT*

**An Archaeological Watching
Brief
at Land Adjacent to
2 Tanyard Lane,
Alvechurch, Worcestershire**

B.U.F.A.U.



Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
Project No. 599
July 1999

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at Land Adjacent to
2 Tanyard Lane, Alvechurch,
Worcestershire**

by
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An Archaeological Watching Brief at Land Adjacent to 2 Tanyard Lane, Alvechurch Worcestershire

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1.0 Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out during the reduction of the ground level and the excavation of the foundation trenches on a plot of land adjacent to 2 Tanyard Lane, Alvechurch, Worcestershire. During the course of this programme of groundwork, no archaeological deposits were identified that could be associated with medieval tenements that may have existed here. A record of the stratigraphy was made.

2.0 Introduction

This report outlines the results of a watching brief carried out in June/July 1999, during development on a plot of land adjacent to 2 Tanyard Lane, Alvechurch, Worcestershire, in an area of possible survival of medieval deposits associated with tenement plots (HWCM 17714). The development was the construction of a single, detached house, which included considerable reduction of the existing ground level to enable the construction of a drive at road level. The archaeological monitoring of this work was carried out in accordance with a condition of planning permission granted by Bromsgrove District Council (ref. B96/0968) and their brief (Appendix 1). The groundwork was carried out by Venables Construction, with the Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit commissioned to monitor these excavations to assess the depth, date, extent and nature of any archaeological deposits encountered.

3.0 The Site (NGR SO 027 727) (Figs. 1 & 2)

The site is located on the north side of Tanyard Lane, to the east of 2 Tanyard Lane and to the west of the rear boundaries of properties fronting onto Birmingham Road and Red Lion Street, in Alvechurch, Worcestershire. The plot of land measures approximately 25m long by 8m wide and rises approximately 1.75m above the street level at its highest point.

4.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

The site lies within the historic core of Alvechurch, which is first recorded as part of an 8th century estate given by Offa to St. Peter's Church, Brecon and later held by St. Mary's Worcester from A.D. 934 (Dalwood 1996, 2). The settlement was probably focused around the site of the church of St. Lawrence (itself dating to the 12th and 13th centuries) from the 10th century, with mention of the manor in the Domesday Book , with the bishop of Worcester possibly establishing a residence in Alvechurch by the 11th century (*ibid.*).

The town developed under the ownership of the bishops of Worcester, with the moated bishop's palace first recorded in c.1236, but probably dating from the late-12th century (Aston 1972, 57), and an annual fair and weekly market granted in c.1239 (*ibid.*). Burgesses are first recorded in the late-13th century, with 58 tenants holding 76½ burgages (Dyer 1980, 61). Alvechurch failed to develop into a larger borough possibly due to its proximity to Birmingham and Bromsgrove or its late foundation (Halwood 1996, 2) and little is recorded from the borough during the rest of the medieval period (*ibid.*)

By the 16th century, Leland records the bishop's palace in a poor state of repair (Chandler 1993, 516), and by the 18th century it had been used for farmland and orchards, with the palace itself finally being demolished in 1780 at a similar time to the decline of the market (Halwood 1996, 2). With the decline of Alvechurch as a market town, little changed in the town until the expansion of the housing estates to the west of the historic core, in the late 20th century.

Archaeological investigations in the town have supported the historical evidence, with features dated to the 12th and 14th century identified in Red Lion Street (Early 1994; HWCM 21267) and several medieval features associated with the bishop's palace (Halwood 1996, 4). Apart from the 13th century church of St. Lawrence there are four medieval buildings remaining in Alvechurch (*ibid.*). Cartographic evidence also suggests that tenement plots existed on the west and east side of Birmingham Road (HWCM 17714 & 17717), Red Lion Street (HWCM 17711 & 17716) and Swan Street (HWCM 17712 & 17713).

The site itself lies within the backplots of the tenements on the west side of Birmingham Road (HWCM 1714) and evidence of medieval/post-medieval activity may be preserved here.

5.0 Objectives

The principal objective of the watching brief was to identify and record any significant archaeological deposits prior to their destruction during its development. Particular attention was paid to the identification of any remains possibly associated with medieval/ post-medieval tenement plots.

6.0 Method

The reduction of the ground level and excavation of the foundation trenches was monitored by suitably qualified archaeologists from Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit. Any significant archaeological deposits were to be excavated by hand and recorded on pro-forma record cards supplemented by scale plans, section drawings and photographs, where appropriate. Where no archaeological deposit was identified the stratigraphy was recorded and photographed. These records comprise the site archive, which, at the time of writing, is currently stored at Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit.

7.0 The Results

No archaeological deposits were identified during the course of this watching brief and no artefacts were recovered that pre-dated the late-20th century. The red clay natural subsoil horizon was overlain by a 0.3 to 0.4m-thick buried garden soil, which was underneath the modern 0.4-0.5m thick topsoil deposit. Although there were some patches of brick rubble within these deposits, they remained largely undisturbed.

Prior to development, the front of the plot was defined by a one metre high sandstone wall, the blocks of which measured 0.6m by 0.3m by 0.35m high, on average. Some of these blocks had evidence of weathered tool marks arranged in a herring bone pattern. It was evident that these blocks had been re-used from another structure, although no date could be established based on the style of tool marks alone. There exists, however, the possibility that these blocks originally belonged to a local medieval/ post-medieval structure.

8.0 Assessment of the Archaeological Importance of the Site

The lack of archaeological evidence suggests that the site was not within the backplot of the medieval tenement that may have fronted onto the Birmingham Road (HWCM 17714) and the depth of relatively undisturbed garden soil may suggest that this plot of land has been reasonably undisturbed during Alvechurch's development to the present day. The sandstone blocks that were used in the boundary wall, prior to demolition, may have originated from an important medieval building in the town or region, but there is no corroborating evidence to support this theory. It does provide a degree of evidence to suggest that the tenement plots probably did not extend beyond the rear property boundaries of 31, 33 and 35 Birmingham Road.

9.0 Acknowledgements

This project was sponsored by Venables Construction, under the co-ordination of Louisa and Mark Venables. The groundwork was carried out by employees of Venables Construction and their sub-contractors, whose co-operation was greatly appreciated. The archaeological watching brief was carried out by Gary Coates from B.U.F.A.U. Iain Ferris monitored the project throughout and edited this report.

10.0 References

All HWCM references refer to Worcestershire county sites and monument records.

Aston, M.A. (1972) *Earthworks at the Bishop's Palace, Alvechurch, Worcestershire*, Trans. Worcs. Arch. Soc., 3 ser 3, pp.55-9

Chandler, J. (1993) *John Leland's Itinerary: Travels in Tudor England*

Dalwood, H. (1996) *Archaeological Assessment of Alvechurch, Hereford and Worcester*, HWCAS internal report 295

Dyer, C. (1980) *Lords and Peasants in a Changing Society: the Estates of the Bishopric of Worcester, 680-1540*, Cambridge

Early, R. 1994 *Red Lion Street, Alvechurch, Hereford and Worcester: Archaeological Field Evaluation 1994*, Oxford Archaeological Unit report

Figures

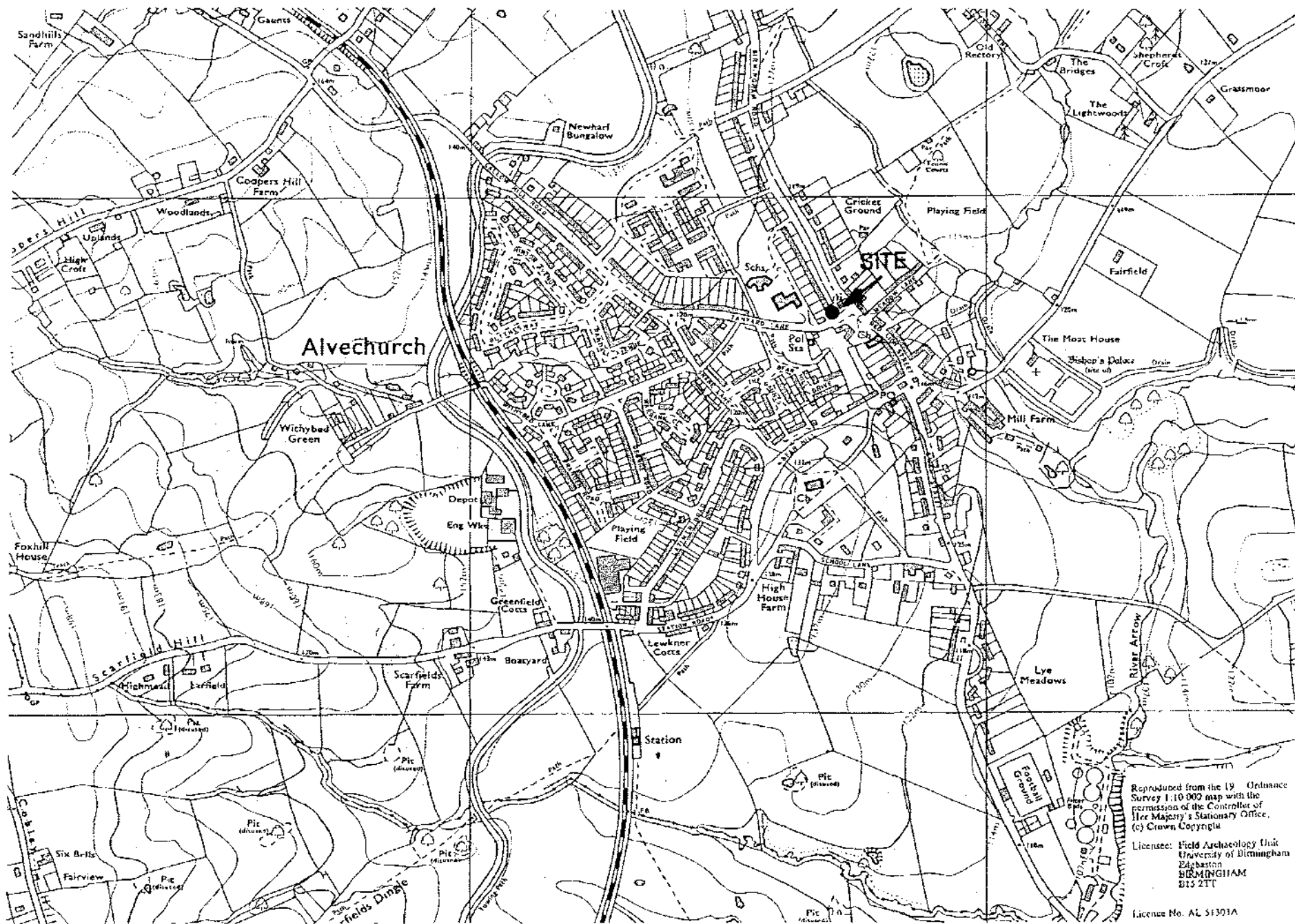


Figure 1

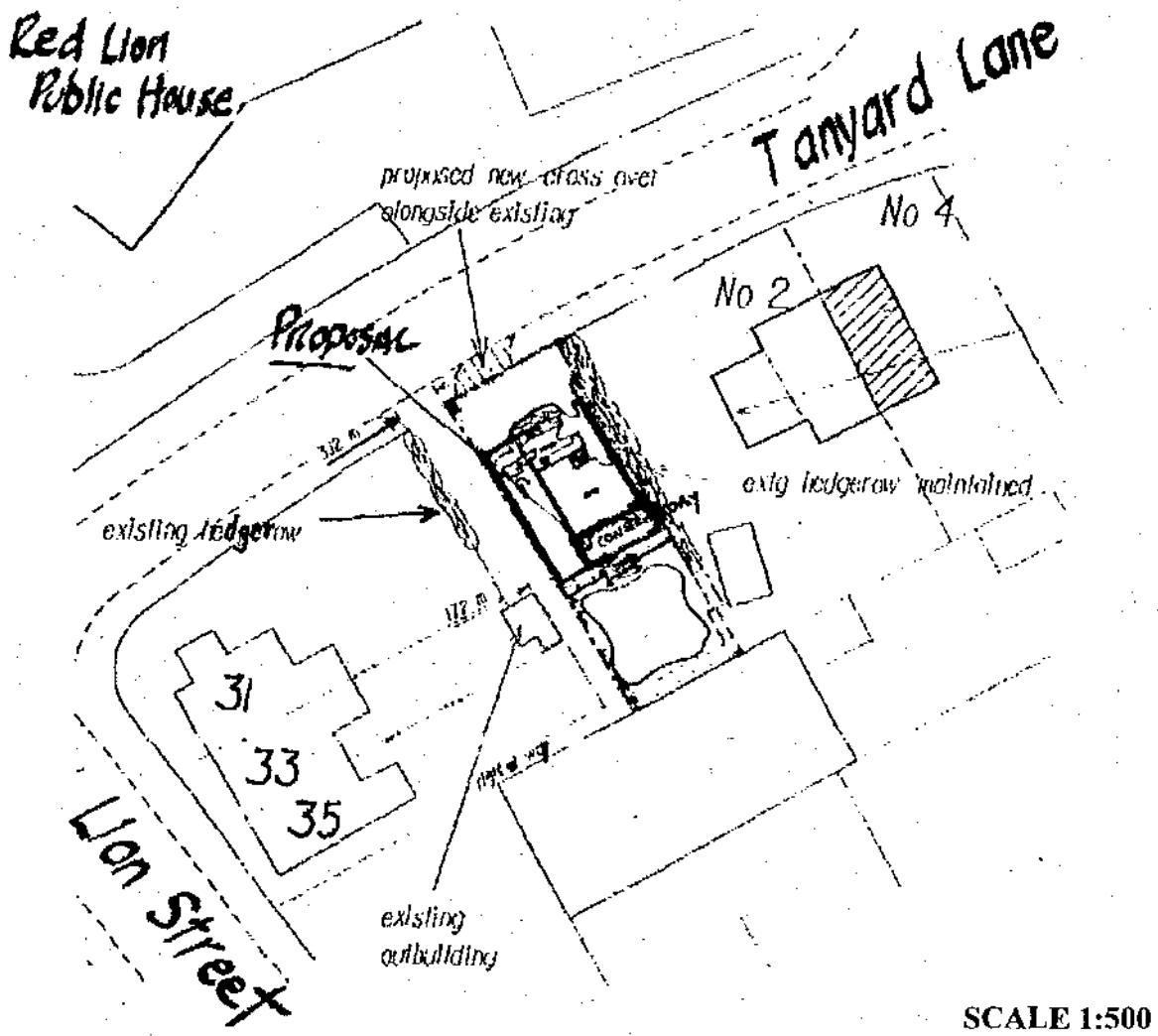


Figure 2

Appendix 1

1.0 Background

LAND ADJACENT TO 2 TANYARD LANE,
ALVECHURCH, WORCS.

1.1 About the site

The site is located at NGR SO 027 727 as shown on the attached plan. The area of the proposed development is currently vacant, in domestic use.

The solid geology is Mercia Mudstone, overlain in part by alluvium and gravels (British Geological Survey, 1:50,000, sheet 183). The soils are gley soils of the Brockhurst 2 association (Soil Survey of England and Wales, Rag *et al* 1984).

1.2 Planning background and justification

A planning application has been submitted to Bromsgrove District Council by Mr N Groves (reference B96/0968). The application proposes the construction of one three-bedroom detached house.

The site is registered on the County Sites and Monuments Record (reference HWCMI 17714) as a site of archaeological interest (Statutory Instruments 1988 no 1813).

Should the planning authority grant permission for this development it is recommended that they secure the provision of a watching brief during construction, by the application of a negative condition as outlined in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16, Section 30.

The proposed development will affect, or potentially affect, an archaeological site on which deposits of importance are likely to exist. Available information suggests that a watching brief is necessary to fulfil the aims of the County Structure Plan (Hereford and Worcester County Council 1993; policy CTC5) and the district local plan (Bromsgrove District Local Plan).

1.3 Archaeological background and justification

The site of the proposed development lies within the historic town of Alvechurch, within an area identified by the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey (Dalwood, *Archaeological Assessment of Alvechurch*, HWCAS internal report 295, May 1996) as a block of medieval tenement plots.

Alvechurch formed part of an 8th century estate given by Offa to St Peter's Church, Bredon. The manor was mentioned in the Domesday Book, when there was a priest and the Bishop of Worcester may have had a residence at Alvechurch at this date. The bishop's palace at Alvechurch was probably built by the late 12th century, and is first recorded in 1236. The planned borough was laid out at the gate of the palace in c 1239. Tenement plots are first indicated in the 1290's when there were 58 tenants in the town.

The tenement plots are shown as narrow plots on maps from 1792 and 1884. They front onto the east side of Birmingham Road, both sides of Tanyard Lane. A tenement plot would have contained a house or shop fronting the street with gardens, yards and sometimes industrial areas to the rear. The proposed development lies within the backplot of one of these tenements. Any remains from such a property could tell us much about social and economic life in medieval Alvechurch.

The above is not a documentary study as required by section 3.3 of the plan.

2.0 Scope of the project

The watching brief on the site will consist of:

observation of all ground breaking activity excavated in association with this proposed development.

Salvage recording aims to observe and record archaeological deposits revealed during ground works and to recover finds and environmental data where present.

2.1 Research aims

The research aim is to establish the presence and significance of an archaeological deposit. This will be used to assess future policies in the area.

The research aim will only be deemed to be satisfactory concluded on the submission of a final report, as per IFA code of conduct, principle 2.

3.0 Requirements

The following requirements are considered by the County Archaeological Service to be necessary for successfully achieving the aims of the project and to ensure best practice. The project should conform to government advice as set out in *PPG16*.

3.1 The Code of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists will be followed.

The Code of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists represents a basic measure of the professionalism of any archaeological contractor, whether or not they are members of the Institute. This ensures a high standard of archaeological work and professional ethics amongst all archaeologists contracting to undertake archaeological work in the County.

3.2 Before the project commences a methods statement should be presented to the County Archaeology Officer detailing approaches to the site.

A methods statement should include detail such as recording techniques, treatment of artefactual and environmental material, report structure and deposition.

3.3 The County Sites and Monuments Record must be consulted before fieldwork commences, and must be appropriately cited.

The archaeological background to any site can only be investigated by consulting the County Sites and Monuments Record. Consequently consultation of the SMR is likely to be considered a condition of fulfilling the brief.

Primary and secondary documentary sources relating to the area should be consulted. Usually this is limited to those sources referenced in the Sites and Monuments Record.

The County Records Office and the County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) are two appropriate sources for primary and secondary information (addresses included), although others may also be considered. The County Sites and Monuments Record includes a library of aerial photographs for the County, and a reference library for the archaeology of the County.

3.4 Specialist requirements.

The project should include appropriate specialist provision, for example with artefactual and environmental consultants, who may need to give advice in the field.

3.5 A basic stratigraphic record of the groundworks must be made.

- * Observation of stripping or cutting operations should be made. This should give an adequate indication of the stratigraphic sequence and features.
- * Negative evidence should also be reported.
- * A contingency allowance may have been required to allow for more detailed recording.

3.6 An assessment of the state of archaeological preservation and significance must be undertaken. Physical, artefactual and environmental aspects must all be considered.

- * In assessing the significance of deposits the non-statutory criteria for the scheduling of ancient monuments used by the Department of the Environment may be employed as a guide (PPG16 Annex 4).
- * See the Institute of Field Archaeologists Guidelines for Finds Work.

3.7 The landowner must be encouraged to deposit artefacts with an appropriate museum.

- * Any archival material should be deposited with an appropriate museum which has Museum and Galleries Commission approved storage facilities. Depositors must accept the financial responsibility for finds storage. The current (1995) nationally agreed rate is a one of payment of £12 per box. The extent of finds requiring storage will need to be considered at the assessment stage, following completion of fieldwork. Contact County Museum (Curator of Archaeology) for advice.
- * The selected museum must be approached in advance and to agree in advance that the museum will take archaeological material, and to determine whether any conditions will be made, subject to their collections policy.

3.8 A written report must be produced as part of the project.

- * The report should detail aims, methods, location and size of archive, and a discussion of the results.
- * The report should be published through an appropriate medium (eg the County Sites and Monuments Record, or *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists Field Club* or *Transactions of the Worcestershire Archaeological Society*). The report should be submitted for publication within one year of completion of fieldwork.
- * Two copies of the report must be sent to the County Sites and Monuments Record, as well as to the clients and their agents.

3.9 Presentation of data must be clear and concise.

- * The location of archaeological fieldwork must be clearly indicated on a location plan, which should be readily related to the National Grid, and/or two or more known points which can later be identified.
- * The location of significant archaeological remains must be clearly marked on plans and sections.
- * The evidence reported must be capable of reinterpretation by other archaeologists.

3.10 A report of the fieldwork must be reported to the County Archaeology Officer and/or the County Sites and Monuments Record within three months of completion of fieldwork.

Findings (including negative findings) should be reported by letter or through submission of an interim or draft report sent to the County Sites and Monuments Record.

3.11 It is advised that the County Archaeology Officer and/ or the planning advisory staff of the County Archaeological Service are invited to monitor the fieldwork.

3.12 Further information

- * This brief has been prepared on the basis of information available through the County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). If the Applicant has further information which may be relevant to the site they should contact the Planning Advisory Section as soon as possible.
- * The Service cannot accept any responsibility for the notification of hazards (services, contaminated ground etc) on the site, and the presence of obstacles to excavation and access. These must be resolved by the Applicant (and landowner if not the Applicant) and or the Archaeological Contractor.
- * It will be the responsibility of the contractor, any sub contractors and the applicant to establish safe working practices based on Construction Design and Management (regulations) and other current health and safety legislation.

4.0 Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 Advisory Service

- * The Planning Advisory Section of the County Archaeological Service advises the Local Planning Authority on archaeological matters. Having assessed this particular application, the Section has prepared this brief to satisfy the terms of the advice. The service is available to give advice throughout the programme of archaeological works to the Applicant. There is no cost to the Applicant for any of the services of the Planning Advisory Section.
- * The Applicant is responsible for supplying the information outlined in this brief to the Planning Authority. An appropriately qualified Archaeological Contractor must be able to undertake the programme of archaeological works on behalf of the Applicant.
- * Appropriate notice shall be given to the County Archaeology Officer of the commencement of fieldwork. Four weeks notice is normally required prior to the commencement of fieldwork, unless otherwise agreed.

4.2 Choosing an Archaeological Contractor

The Applicant may seek competitive tenders, or may have used a particular Archaeological Contractor in the past. The profession's regulatory body is the Institute of Field Archaeologists. The Field Section of the County Archaeological Service is enabled to undertake archaeological projects and has a commitment to the archaeological heritage of the County. They would be happy to provide a proposal and quotation to the Applicant on request. Should the Applicant wish to seek quotations from other appropriately qualified individuals or organisations, they should consult the Institute of Field Archaeologists and ask for a copy of the *Directory of Members*.