

# An Archaeological Evaluation at Avondale House Farm, Childswickham, Worcestershire

*A Report for Mr Shufflebotham*

April 2004

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**Project: PJ 117**

**WSM: 33555**

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## Summary of Results

*An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Avondale House Farm, Childswickham, Worcestershire in March 2004. The results determined that there were no significant archaeological deposits or features within the evaluated area. It was concluded that the land had been utilised for arable farming during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and that any remains associated with cropmark enclosures to the west noted on aerial photographs, have either been lost to the plough, or did not extend into the evaluation trenches.*

## 1. Project Background

### 1.1. Location of the Site

Avondale House Farm is situated around 2 kilometres to the west of Childswickham, just off minor road from Hinton-on-the-Green to Broadway (Figure 1). The proposed development site incorporates the agricultural buildings at Avondale House Farm, together with a proposed new access from the road to the buildings.

### 1.2. Development Details

A planning application has been made to Wychavon District Council for the change of use of redundant farm buildings and the construction of access tracks and hard standing on the site (reference W/03/0945). The planning process determined that the proposed development may affect an archaeological site listed on the County Sites and Monuments Record (WSM 04651). The listed site is recorded on aerial photographs (O638.1-2 and 293-4 held at County Sites and Monuments Record), which shows a series of enclosures, likely to be of prehistoric or Roman date. As a result, the Planning Archaeologist, Worcestershire County Council, advised that the site should be subject to an archaeological evaluation prior to any development taking place, as required site under Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (Section 30). A brief of work was written for the project by The Planning Archaeologist, Planning Advisory Section, Worcestershire County Council (WAS 2003).

### 1.3. Topography, Geology and Archaeology

The site lies on level ground at around 52 metres above sea level, overlooked by Bredon Hill to the west and the Cotswold Hills to the south-east. The village of Childswickham is around 2 kilometres to the east. The level ground across the site is broken by a natural ridge that runs

east-west past the farmhouse. The ridge has been ploughed out in the adjacent western field, but continues across the approach track to the farmhouse on the east, where the track rises and falls as it traverses the scarp. The top of the ridge has been used as a track across the field

The calcareous clay soils of the area are ideal for growing winter cereals and oil rapeseed. The underlying geology is of Middle Lias (British Geological Survey 1989).

There are several sites listed on the County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) within 500 metres of the development site. These indicate occupation or activity in the area from at least the Middle Bronze Age. A copper alloy dagger blade and the lower portion of a Bronze Age socketed axe were found near Burnside Cottages, around 500 metres to the north-east. A salvage excavation undertaken at the same site recovered material from the Iron Age, Roman, medieval and post-medieval periods. The work also identified a Roman ditch (Napthan and Ratkai 1996). Several sites have been identified during aerial reconnaissance. Cropmark enclosures, a likely prehistoric or Roman enclosure and field-system, have been located on Avondale House Farm (WSM 04651), and to the south of the farm, a linear feature has been identified, possibly a trackway or road (WSM 01864).

The settlement of Childswickham dates from at least the medieval period. The parish church of St Mary contains 12<sup>th</sup> century fabric within its build and there are earthworks around the village that are indicative of medieval occupation. To the south of Avondale House Farm there are recorded areas of medieval or early post-medieval ridge and furrow agriculture (WSM 06996; WSM 06997), the ridge and furrow would have been more extensive in the past and would have extended up to the limits of the village.

## 2. Methods and Process

### 2.1. Project Specification

- ❑ The archaeological project conforms to the Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (IFA 1999).
- ❑ The project conforms to a brief prepared by the Planning Advisory Section, Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Section, Worcestershire County Council (WHEAS 2003) for which a project proposal and detailed specification was produced (Mercian Archaeology 2004).
- ❑ Mercian Archaeology adhere to the service practice and health and safety policy as contained within the Mercian Archaeology Service Manual (Williams 2003)

### 2.2. Background Research

Prior to the commencement of fieldwork relevant available cartographic sources were consulted. A full search of the Worcestershire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) was commissioned and various archaeological reports were also viewed. The following cartographic sources were specifically consulted:

#### **Cartographic Sources**

Source	Reference Number
British Geological Survey Sheet 183: 1:50000 (1989)	
Soil Survey of England and Wales Sheet 150: 1:50000 (1983)	
Ordnance Survey 1 <sup>st</sup> Edition 6”(1888)	Worcestershire Sheet XLIX.SE
Ordnance Survey 2 <sup>nd</sup> Revised Edition 25”(1923)	Worcestershire Sheet XXIII.12
Ordnance Survey 6”(1957)	Worcestershire Sheet SP03NE

Other sources used are referenced within the report.

### 2.3. The Fieldwork

The evaluation was undertaken on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2004 by Paul Williams and Martin Cook of Mercian Archaeology. The evaluation trenches were excavated by a JCB fitted with a 1metre wide ‘bladed’ bucket.

## 3. The Results

Three trenches were excavated in accordance with the brief, each one being 50 metres long and 1.60 metres wide. The location of the trenches is shown in Figure 3. The northern most trench (Trench 1) was located parallel to the western boundary of the site. It was deliberately sited away from the boundary so as to cause minimal disturbance to a brick rubble track that ran towards the road. Trench 2 was sited to investigate the noticeable ridge that runs east-west across the site and Trench 3 was located adjacent to the modern farm buildings.

All three trenches were devoid of archaeological features or deposits. The topsoil across the site was a yellowish brown silty-clay with rare small rounded stone, with a depth of around 0.20 metres. The topsoil [100, 200, 300] was notably free from inclusions of any kind. The subsoil [101, 201, 301] was variable in depth, from 0.07 metres to 0.20 metres. This was a yellowish buff silty clay with a small percentage of sand. Again, there were no inclusions apart from a rare small rounded stone. The undisturbed natural parent material [102, 202, 302] was encountered at between 0.27 metres and 0.40 metres below the ground surface. The natural was an orangey buff clay with a small percentage of silt and sand. There were laminated bands of white clay within the natural matrix.

The ridge noted on the surface and running through Trench 2 was found to be entirely natural. The subsoil to the south of the ridge was deeper, indicating some movement down the shallow slope.

There were no significant archaeological features encountered during the evaluation.

## 4. Analysis of the Results

The cropmark enclosures as interpreted on the aerial photograph lie adjacent to the east of the evaluated area (Figure 3) and do not appear in any of the trenches. This suggests one of three scenarios; firstly, that the enclosures lie totally to the east of the proposed development site, second, that the features have been ploughed away in the evaluated area, or finally, that the trenches have been placed between enclosure ditches.

Evidence from the evaluation indicates that there has been ploughing across the site, but the moderate depth of plough soil build up suggests that this has been intermittent and that the land has been set to grass in between episodes of ploughing. Having said this, there were no indications of plough furrowing across the trenches that could be associated with former ridge and furrow agriculture, which is evident to the south and is likely to have been carried through into the development site. Therefore, we can suggest that it is likely that ploughing has been at least deep enough to remove ridge and furrow, but not deep enough to create a deep plough soil, signifying that any enclosure ditches would still be obvious in the trenches had they extended this far to the west.

## 5. Conclusion

The results of the watching brief demonstrate that there were no significant archaeological deposits or layers within the proposed development area. The cropmark enclosures seen in the aerial photograph was not encountered during the evaluation and is likely they are confined to the east of the site.

## 6. Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Alan Shufflebotham of Avondale House Farm, Mick George for supply of the JCB. Thanks are also due to Martin Cook of Mercian Archaeology, Deborah Overton for carrying out the SMR search and Mike Glyde, Planning Archaeologist, Worcestershire County Council.

## REFERENCES

**Mercian Archaeology** (2003). Proposal and Specification for an Archaeological Field Evaluation at Avondale House Farm, Childswickham, Worcestershire.

**Napthan, M and Ratkai, S** (1996). Salvage Recording at Burnside Cottage, Childswickham, Worcestershire. Hereford and Worcester Archaeology Service Report **432**

**Ragg, J M, Beard, G R, George, H, Heaven, F W, Hollis, J M, Jones, R J A, Palmer, R C, Reeve, M J, Robson, J D, and Whitfield, W A D** (1984). Soils and their use in midland and western England, Soil Survey of England and Wales, 12

**Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service** (2003) Brief for an Archaeological Evaluation at Avondale House Farm, Childswickham, Worcestershire Worcestershire.

## CONTEXT RECORD

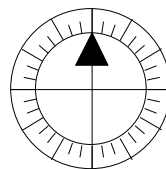
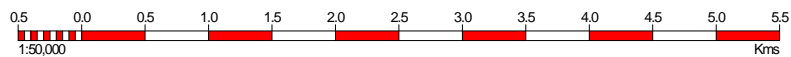
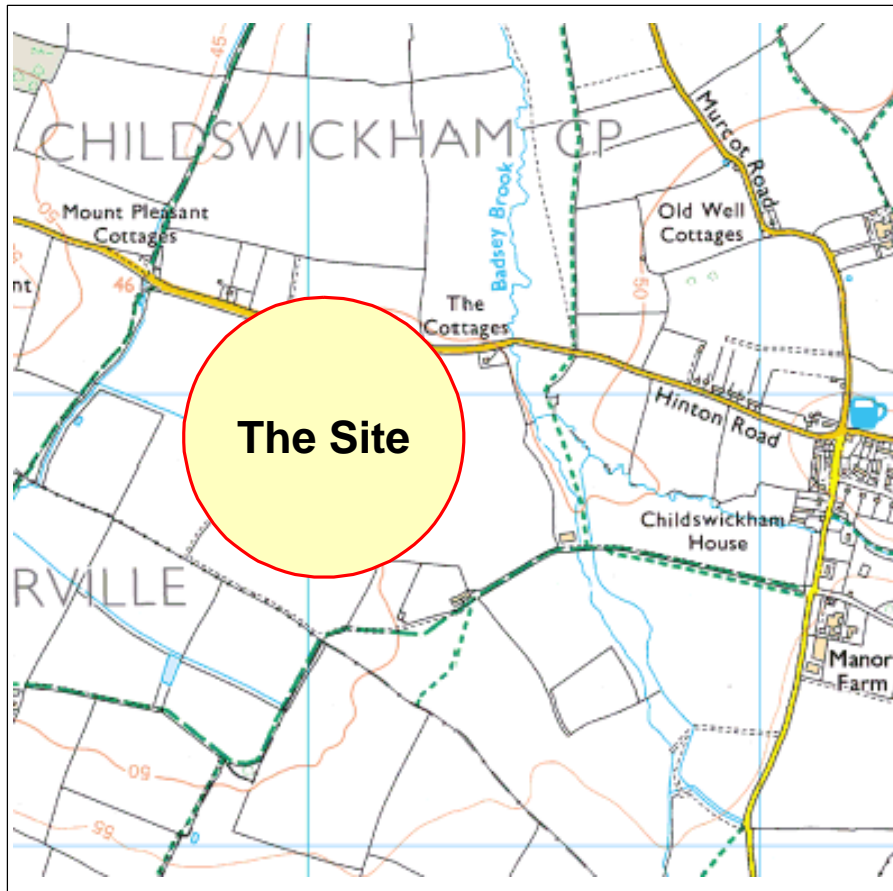
Context	Type	Level	Thickness	Date Ascribed
<b>100, 200, 300</b>	Topsoil	GL	Max 0.24m	
Comprised of	Silty-clay with moderate root action in top 0.08m			
Compaction	Friable			
Colour	Yellowish-brown			
Inclusions	Roots; rare small round pebble			
Finds	None			

Context	Type	Level	Thickness	Date Ascribed
<b>101,201,301</b>	Subsoil	0.24m	0.06-0.20m	
Comprised of	Silty-clay with <5% sand			
Compaction	Friable			
Colour	Yellowish-buff			
Inclusions	Rare small round pebble			
Finds	None			

Context	Type	Level	Thickness	Date Ascribed
<b>102,202,302</b>	Natural	0.30-0.40m		
Comprised of	Clay, with <5% silt and sand			
Compaction	Plastic			
Colour	Orange-buff, with white laminations			
Inclusions	Rare small round stone			
Finds	None			



Figure 1: Location of Site

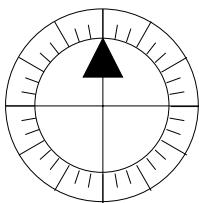
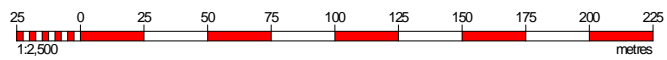
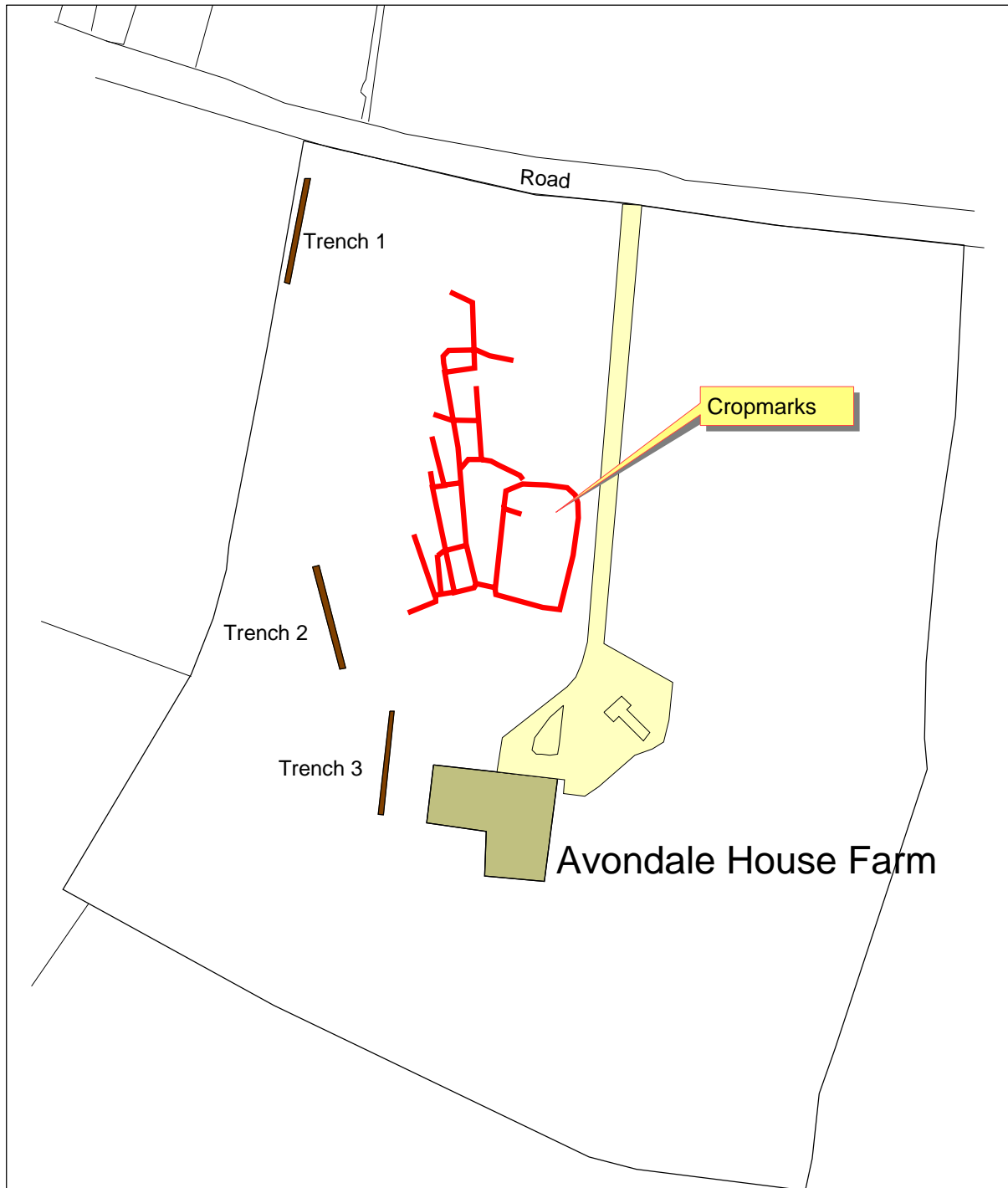


Location of the site at Avondale House Farm, Childswickham

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**Figure 3. Trench Location Plan**



# Plates

## Plate 1



*Trench 1 looking north*

## Plate 2



*Trench 2 looking south-east*

# Plates

## Plate 3



*Trench 3 looking south*

## Plate 4



*Avondale House Farm looking south-east*