

**Church Row Farm, Frome Road,  
Rode, Somerset**

**An Archaeological Evaluation**

**for Mr W J Joyce**

by Steve Ford

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code: CRF08/72

**July 2008**

## Summary

**Site name:** Church Row Farm, Frome Road, Rode, Somerset

**Grid reference:** ST 8083 5345

**Site activity:** Evaluation

**Date and duration of project:** 3rd-4th July 2008

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Steve Ford

**Site code:** CRF08/72

**Area of site:** c 0.5ha

**Summary of results:** A single early post medieval pit (16th century) was recorded. A small collection of pottery was mainly post-medieval but included two medieval sherds. There was no evidence of the graveyard ever having extended into the site, and nothing to suggest intensive use of the site in the medieval or any earlier period. The site appears to have little or no archaeological potential.

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Somerset County Museum Service in due course.

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Report edited/checked by:	Jennifer Lowe✓ 24.07.08
	Steve Preston✓ 24.07.08

# Church Row Farm, Frome Road, Rode, Somerset An Archaeological Evaluation

by Steve Ford

**Report 08/72**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Church Row Farm, Frome Road, Rode, Somerset (ST 8083 5345) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Michael Fowler of Michael Fowler Architects, 19 High Street, Pewsey, Wiltshire, SN9 5AF on behalf of Mr W J Joyce, Nantoes, Kettles Lane, West Ashton, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, BA14 6AW.

Planning permission is to be sought from Mendip District Council to redevelop the site. As a consequence of the possibility of archaeological deposits being damaged or destroyed by the proposed development(s), an archaeological evaluation has been requested, which will provide information on the archaeological potential of the site and inform the planning process.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and Mendip District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Steven Membery of Somerset County Archaeological Service. The fieldwork was undertaken by Steve Ford, James Earley and Oliver Brown between the 3rd and 4th July 2008 and the site code is CRF 08/72. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Somerset County Museum Service in due course.

The site lies in an area of archaeological potential identified within the Mendip District local plan due to its proximity to the medieval parish church and location within the historic core of the village. A Neolithic long barrow lies less than 600m to the east.

## **Location, topography and geology**

The site currently consists of a farmhouse, outbuildings, a farmyard and associated paddocks. (Fig. 2). It is of irregular plan and is located on the east side of the Frome Road and is *c.* 0.5ha in extent. The southern boundary of the site abuts the churchyard of St Lawrence's Church. It is at a height of approximately 69m above Ordnance Datum and slopes gently down to the north. On the higher ground to the south the underlying geology is limestone (cornbrash), but with an orange sandy clay with occasional limestone fragments on the lower land to

the north which is possibly the Kellaway formation or a clay cap as a part of the limestone formation (BGS 2000).

## **Archaeological background**

A search of the Somerset Historic Environment Record was made on 18th July 2008 for a nominal 500m radius around the site. This revealed 48 entries of which 40 were for listed buildings. A single archaeological intervention was recorded (a watching brief) on the site of the old Rode Brewery close to the centre of the current village to the north west.

A modest range of sites and finds are recorded for the search area close to the site. The earliest entries refer to prehistoric monuments with the 'Devil's Bed and Bolster', an early Neolithic long barrow lying to the east and a possible Bronze Age 'pond' barrow with recumbent standing stone to the south east. A further prehistoric entry refers to the finding of a debased Late Iron Age Dobunnic gold *stater* (coin) from near the church. There are no entries for Roman or Saxon finds. Three medieval entries are recorded. The parish church of St Lawrence is of 14th or 15th century date and is a listed building (grade I). To the south and west of the church a number of cropmarks and earthworks are considered to represent the remains of the former village earthworks of late Saxon and medieval Rode, which is mentioned in Domesday Book (Williams and Martin 2002). To the north of the site, closer to the present day village centre is the site of a cross.

Several listed buildings are present close to the site on Frome Road. The farmhouse on the site is also listed (grade II) and is considered to be of 17th century date with early 19th century additions.

Figure 5 shows the Rode and Wolverton tithe map of 1840, which is the earliest cartographic source showing the site in detail. On this map, the farmhouse and nearby church are easily identifiable as are several of the field boundaries within the site. The ground plan of the farmhouse on the tithe map is closely comparable with the current layout but the range of buildings currently to its north (and thus forming the enclosed yard area- Fig. 2) are absent in 1840 showing that they are a later 19th or 20th century addition. Three outbuildings standing in 1840 are no longer extant with the two closest to the farm seeming to lie on the same footprints as current structures. Of note with regards to the churchyard is that the eastern boundary has remained static although an extension to the churchyard has taken place further south since 1840.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development.

The specific research aims of this project are:

To determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site;

To determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present;

To determine if medieval deposits representing settlement and or boundary divisions are present on site;

To determine if any burial deposits relating to the adjacent churchyard are present.

It was proposed to excavate 8 trenches, each 18m in length and 1.6m wide. Topsoil, turf and any other overburden were to be removed by a JCB-type machine under constant archaeological supervision, to expose archaeologically sensitive levels. Where archaeological features were certainly or probably present, the stripped areas were to be cleaned using appropriate hand tools. Sufficient of the archaeological features and deposits exposed were to be excavated or sampled by hand to satisfy the aims of the brief. This work was to be carried out in a manner which would not compromise the integrity of archaeological features or deposits which might warrant preservation *in situ*, or might be better excavated under conditions pertaining to full excavation. Spoil heaps were to be monitored.

## **Results**

Ten trenches were eventually excavated ranging in length from 6.3m to 21.2m in the positions shown in Figure 3. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

### Trench 1 (Pl. 1)

Trench 1 was aligned WNW–ESE and measured 21.2m in length, 1.6m wide and was 0.40m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.14m of turf and topsoil over 0.16m of brown sandy clay subsoil above a brown sandy clay natural geology. No archaeological finds or deposits were revealed.

### Trench 2

Trench 2 was aligned NE–SW and measured 14.7m in length, 1.6m wide and 0.55m deep at the south-west end, decreasing to 0.4m at the north-east end. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.08m of turf and topsoil above 0.16m of made ground above 0.18m brown sandy clay subsoil above orange brown sandy clay natural geology. No archaeological finds or deposits were revealed.

#### Trench 3 (Pl. 2)

Trench 3 was aligned east–west and measured 9.2m in length, 1.2m wide and 0.25m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.16m concrete above 0.08m of brick and stone rubble above limestone and orange/brown clay natural geology. No archaeological finds or deposits were revealed.

#### Trench 4

Trench 4 was aligned ENE–WSW and measured 8.7m in length, 1.2m wide and was 0.26m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.15m concrete above 0.1m of brick and stone rubble above limestone and orange/brown clay natural geology. A modern service traversed the trench with an interceptor at the northern end. No archaeological finds or deposits were revealed.

#### Trench 5 (Pl. 3)

Trench 5 was aligned NE–SW and measured 18.8m in length, 1.6m wide and was 0.56m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.23m of turf and topsoil above 0.25m of brown sandy clay subsoil above limestone natural geology. A single shallow pit (1) was located in the trench (Fig. 4). It was oval in plan, 1.08m across and 0.14m deep with a single fill (50). It contained 4 sherds of early post-medieval (16th century) south Somerset pottery. A further 8 sherds of the same pottery came from the spoil heap.

#### Trench 6

Trench 6 was aligned north–south and measured 18.8m in length, 1.6m and 0.42m deep at the north end but only 0.17m at the south end. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.17m of turf and topsoil above limestone natural geology, which included a calcareous silt patch. A service was present at 5m. No archaeological deposits were revealed but a single sherd of post-medieval pottery was recovered.

#### Trench 7 (Pl. 4)

Trench 7 was aligned NE–SW and measured 7.0m in length, 1.4m wide and 0.26m deep. It was hand dug. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.09m of turf and topsoil above 0.11m of brown sandy clay subsoil above limestone natural geology. No archaeological deposits were revealed but a collection of 19 pottery sherds, mainly post-medieval but including two of medieval date, was recovered.

### Trench 8

Trench 8 was aligned NW–SE and measured 18.7m in length, 1.6m wide and 0.27m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.14m of turf and topsoil above 0.11m of brown sandy clay subsoil above limestone natural geology. No archaeological finds or deposits were revealed.

### Trench 9

Trench 9 was aligned east–west and measured 19.3m in length, 1.6m wide and 0.45m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.14m of turf and topsoil above 0.19m of brown sandy clay subsoil above a brown sandy clay with some limestone pieces natural geology. A large modern pit occupied the trench from 11–17m. No archaeological finds or deposits were revealed.

### Trench 10

Trench 10 was aligned NE–SW and measured 6.3m in length, 1.6m wide and 0.48m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.1m of turf and topsoil above 0.15m of brown sandy clay subsoil above limestone and calcareous silt natural geology. A service was present at 1m. No archaeological deposits were revealed but a single sherd of post-medieval pottery was recovered.

## **Finds**

### *Pottery* by Alan Vince and Kate Steane

A small assemblage of pottery was recovered during the evaluation. The material ranges in date from the medieval period to the modern period. A total of 29 sherds were recovered, weighing 357g (Appendix 2). No cross-fitting sherds were noted.

### Medieval

Two sherds of handmade jars of Bath Fabric A (Vince 1979; Vince 1984) were recovered from Trench 7. The distinguishing characteristics of this fabric are water-polished rounded quartz grains and a silty micaceous groundmass.

### Post-medieval

One sherd of Crockerton ware was recovered from Trench 10. The distinguishing characteristic of this ware is the abundant rounded iron-rich grains present in the groundmass. The sherd is from the base of a jar (or perhaps a bowl) with sooted exterior and a black internal deposit.

The remaining post-medieval sherds are all of South Somerset ware (SSOM). The closest source of this ware to Rode is at Wanstrow, almost 20km to the south-west, but waste from that site does not include slipware and this, at least, may come from further south, for example Donyatt (Coleman-Smith and Pearson 1988), 80km to the south west. There is no clear difference in fabric between the products of these two centres.

Bowls are the most common form in this collection, followed by jars and jugs with a single example of a small cup, possibly of 16th-century date. A similar date is likely for one of the jug sherds, a plain strap handle from a large rounded vessel.

One of the bowls has white slip trailed decoration, with a central white slip circlet surrounded by probable sgraffitto panels to either side of a radial band.

### Modern

The single sherd of modern pottery appears to be a refined whiteware (WHITE) and is the weathered rim from a mug or cup with moulded decoration and traces of overglaze painting. A 19th- or 20th-century date is likely.

The collection includes two sherds of medieval date. Both are fairly fresh and suggest occupation nearby rather than a manuring scatter. The post-medieval pottery includes some probable 16th-century sherds (the Crockerton ware and perhaps the cup rim and one of the jug sherds) as well as at least one sherd of mid 17th-century or later date (the slipware bowl). Only one small assemblage came from a stratified deposit, pit 1 and this can only be dated to the later 16th century or later.

### *Clay pipe*

A single undiagnostic stem fragment of clay tobacco pipe was recovered from Trench 5.

### **Conclusion**

The trenching revealed just a single deposit of archaeological interest, a small pit in Trench 5 of early post-medieval date. Several other trenches produced pottery of similar date, especially Trench 7 which also produced two sherds of fresh medieval pottery. It seems likely that some medieval occupation is present nearby but this may well be restricted to the immediate environs of, or even beneath, the current farmhouse. No evidence of human burial was found to suggest a previously extended church graveyard. Based on the results of this trenching exercise it seems clear cut that no extensive and dense complex of medieval occupation or burial (or



even deposits of earlier periods) is present for the majority of the site and it can be considered to have little or no archaeological potential.

## References

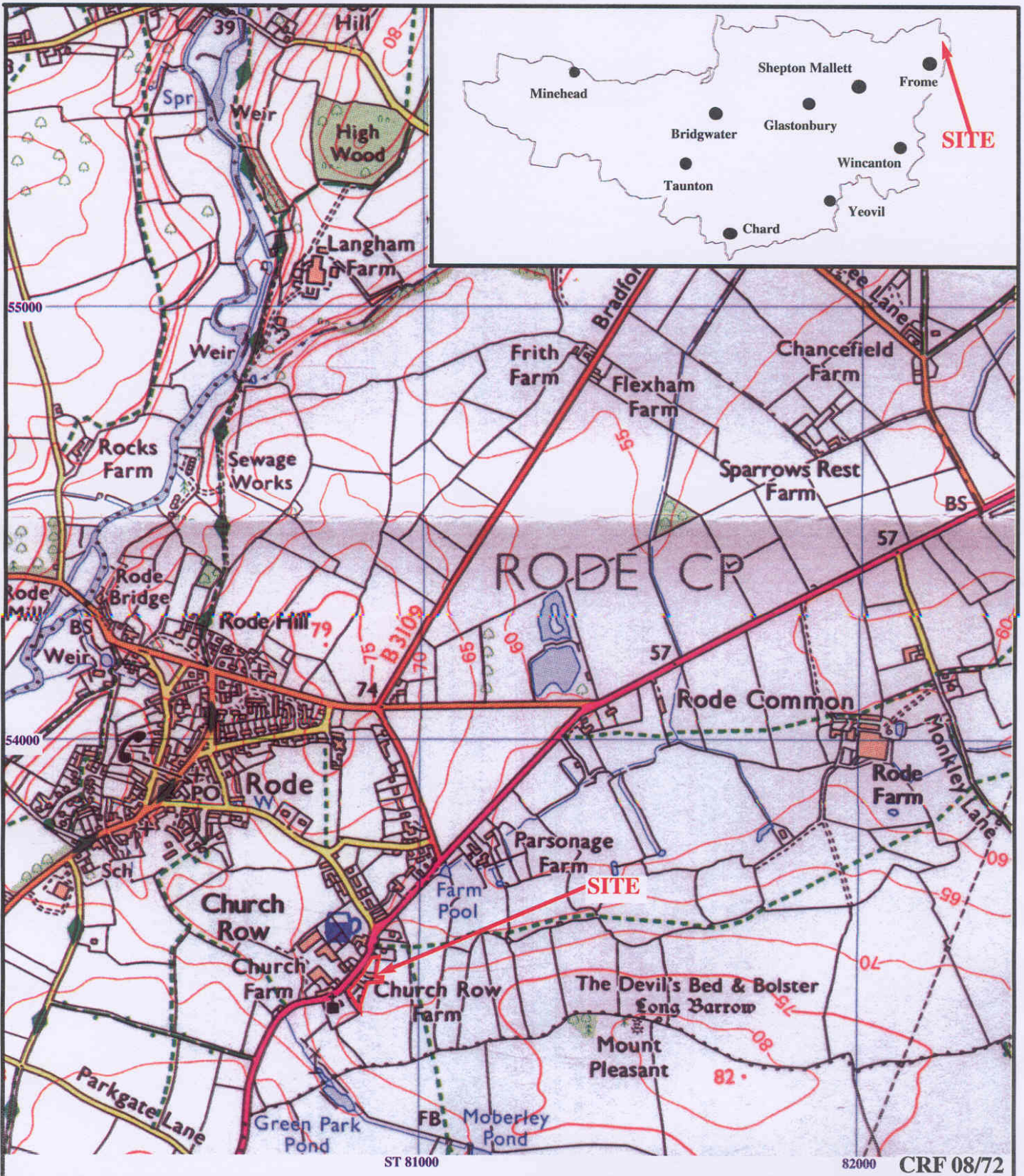
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**APPENDIX 1: Trench details**  
0m at south or west

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	21.2	1.6	0.4	0-0.14m topsoil; 0.14-0.30m brown sandy clay subsoil; 0.30m+ orange brown sandy clay natural geology. <b>[Plate 1]</b>
2	14.7	1.6	0.55	0-0.08m topsoil; 0.08-0.20m made ground; 0.2-0.38m brown sandy clay subsoil; 0.38m+ orange brown sandy clay natural geology.
3	9.2	1.2	0.25	0-0.16m concrete; 0.16-0.24m brick and stone rubble; 0.24m+ limestone and orange/brown clay natural geology. <b>[Plate 2]</b>
4	8.7	1.2	0.26	0-0.15m concrete; 0.15-0.25m brick and stone rubble; 0.25m+ limestone and orange/brown clay natural geology.
5	18.8	1.6	0.56	0-0.23m topsoil; 0.23-0.49m brown sandy clay subsoil; 0.49m + limestone natural geology. Pit 1 <b>[Plate 3]</b>
6	18.8	1.6	0.17S 0.42N	0-0.17m topsoil; 0.17m+ limestone natural geology.
7	7.0	1.4	0.26	0-0.09m topsoil, 0.09-0.22m brown sandy clay subsoil; 0.22m+ limestone natural geology. <b>[Plate 4]</b>
8	18.7	1.6	0.27	0-0.14m topsoil, 0.14m-0.25m brown sandy clay subsoil; 0.25m + limestone natural geology.
9	19.3	1.6	0.45	0-0.14m topsoil, 0.14-0.33m brown sandy clay subsoil, 0.33m+ orange brown sandy clay with some limestone natural geology. Large modern pit at 11-17m
10	6.3	1.6	0.48	0-0.10m topsoil, 0.10-0.25m brown sandy clay subsoil, 0.25m+ calcareous silt/limestone natural geology.

## APPENDIX 2: Pottery catalogue

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>Form</i>	<i>Part</i>	<i>No. sherds</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>Description</i>
5	1	50	ssom	bowl	bs	1	3	glazed int/ext
5	1	50	ssom	bowl	bs	1	24	sooted ext
5	1	50	ssom	bowl	r	1	25	
5	1	50	ssom	bowl	bs	1	18	ext of pot gone
5			ssom	bowl	r	1	22	flanged
5			ssom	jar	r	1	16	glazed under rim
5			ssom	jar	r	1	21	glazed int/on rim
5			ssom	bowl	r	1	14	flanged; no glaze
5			ssom	bowl	bs	3	15	
5			ssom	bowl	bs	1	7	slip and possible sgraffito decorated, sooted ext
6			ssom	cup	r	1	3	
7			batha	jar	bs	2	18	
7			ssom	jug	bs	4	21	
7			ssom	jar	bs	4	27	battered
7			ssom	jar	bs	3	14	glazed int/ext
7			ssom	bowl	bs	1	5	glaze int/red slip ext
7			ssom	bowl	bs	1	3	
7			ssom	bowl	bs	2	17	battered, sooted ext
7			white	tank	r	1	4	moulded dec ext
7			ssom	jug	bs	1	102	handle to body join; strap handle 48 across
10			crockerton	jar	b	1	31	sooted ext; black dep int

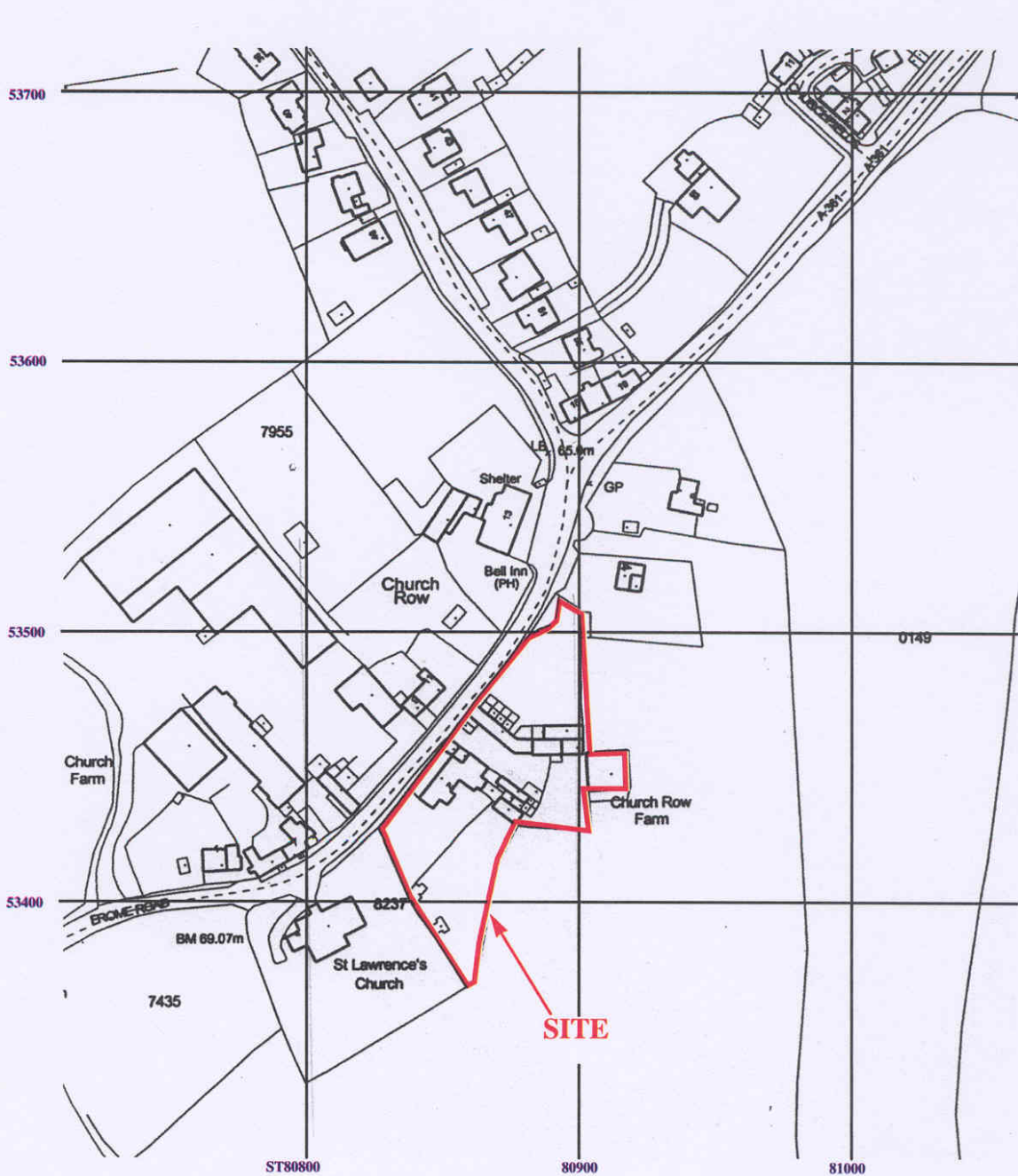


**Church Row Farm, Frome Road, Rode,  
near Frome, Somerset, 2008  
Archaeological Evaluation**

Figure 1. Location of site within Rode and Somerset.

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**Church Row Farm, Frome Road, Rode,  
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site on Frome Road.

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T H A M E S   V A L L E Y  
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# Church Row Farm, Frome Road, Rode, near Frome, Somerset, 2008

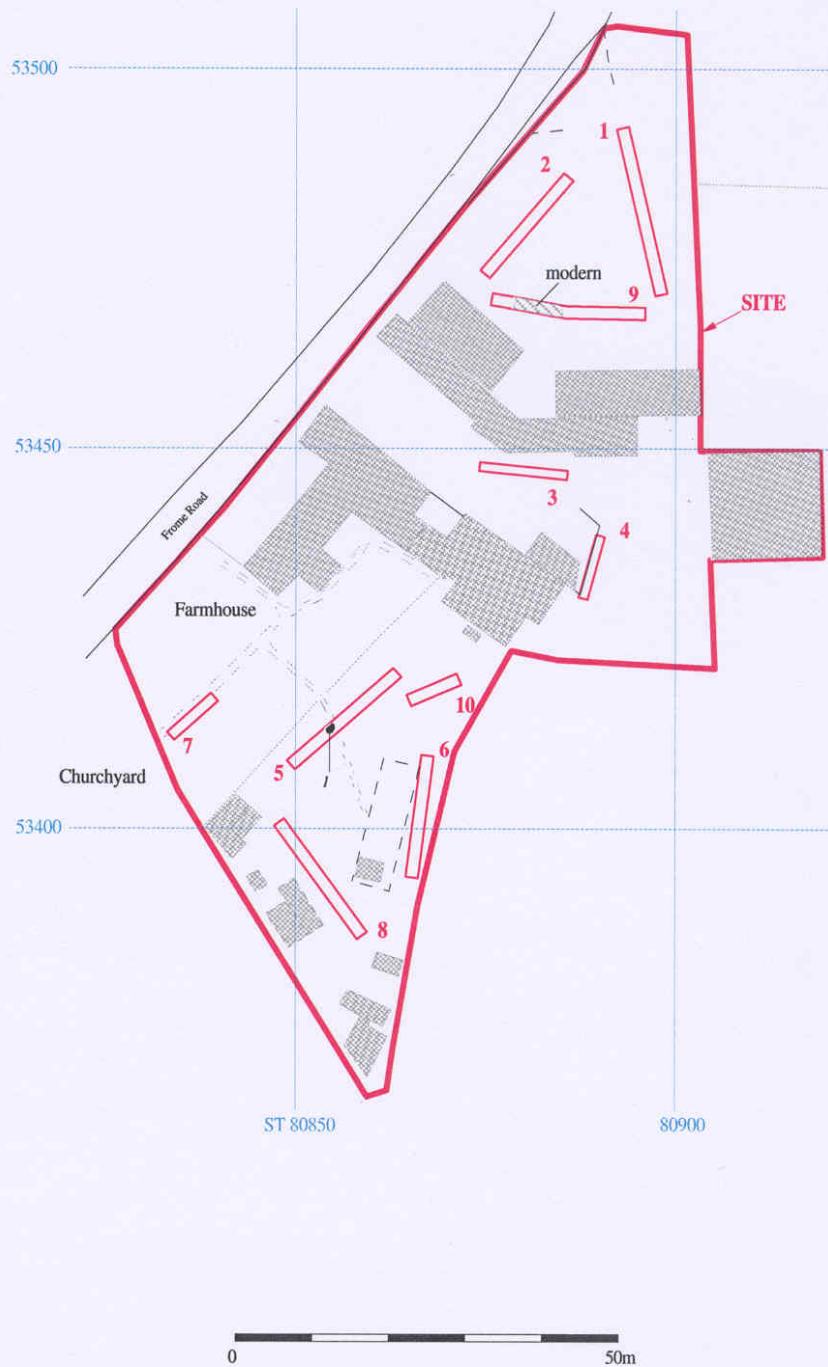


Figure 3. Location of trenches.

# Church Row Farm, Frome Road, Rode, near Frome, Somerset, 2008

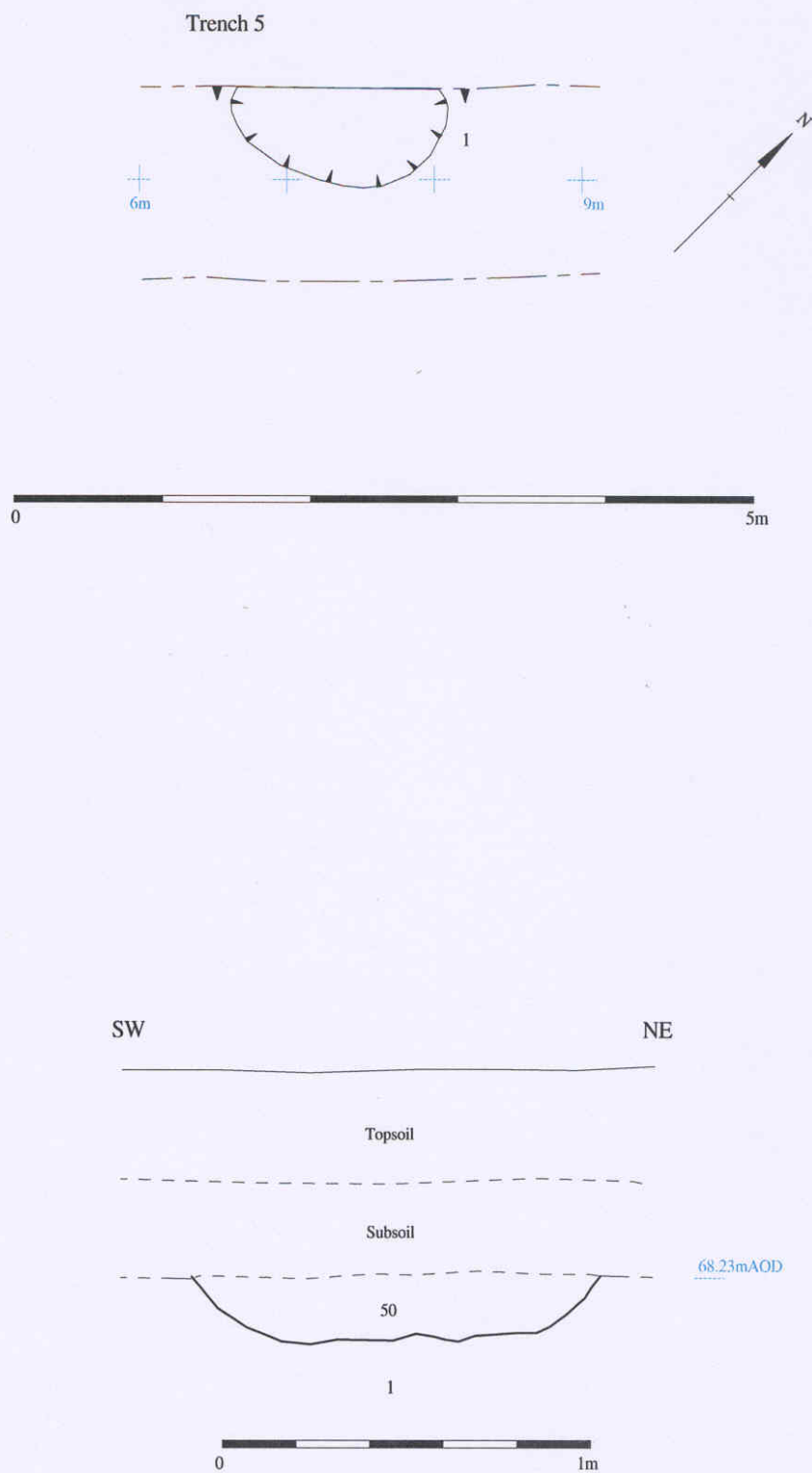
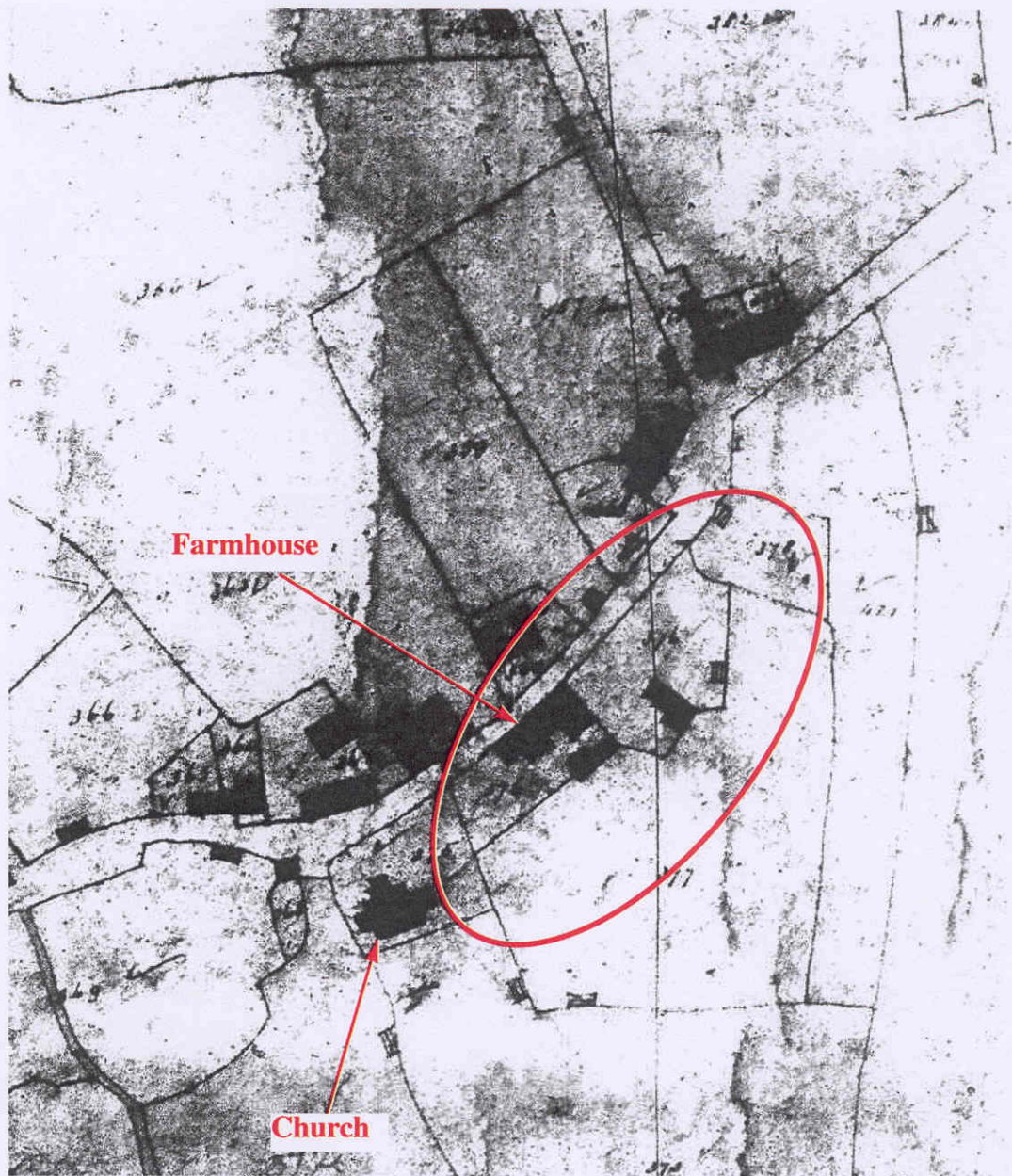


Figure 4. Detail of Trench 5 showing plan and section of Pit 1.



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Figure 5. Rode and Wolverton Tithe Map 1840

Not to scale

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Plate 1. Trench 1, looking north north west, scales 2m and 1m.



Plate 2. Trench 3, looking west south west, scales 2m and 1m.



Plate 3. Trench 5, pit 1, looking north west, horizontal scale 2m, vertical scale 0.5m.



Plate 4. Trench 7, looking north east; scales 2m and 1m.