

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION AT BOWER'S
HILL EQUESTRIAN CENTRE,
BADSEY, WORCESTERSHIRE



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Jon Milward

With a contribution by Alan Jacobs

Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

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Project 2787
Report 1363
WSM 34484

Archaeological evaluation at Bower's Hill Equestrian Centre, Badsey, Worcestershire

Jon Milward

Background information

An archaeological evaluation was conducted on behalf of Mr and Mrs Maddaford, and their agents Timothy Lea and Griffiths, at Bowers Hill Equestrian Centre (SP 0900 4174) to support a planning application submitted to Wychavon District Council (W/05/1155) proposing the construction of stables, ménage and access track. It was considered that the proposed development lies within an area where significant archaeological remains might occur. A complex multi-period settlement, a Romano British settlement and a probable Bronze Age settlement site lie within a radius of 500m. It was also thought that the positioning of the site at the junction of the parish boundaries of Badsey, Willersey and Bretforton might raise the possibility for medieval activity. A brief was therefore prepared (HEAS 2005) for an archaeological evaluation to assess whether deposits were present on the site and their significance.

Fieldwork was conducted by Jon Milward and Darren Miller on the 15th of August 2005.

Aim

The aim of the evaluation through excavation and documentary research was to establish whether archaeological deposits were present in the area and if so establish their significance to support future planning decisions regarding the development of the site.

Methods

The brief required the excavation of two 60m x 1.6m trenches in a specified area (see Figure 2). This was conducted using a JCB 3CX mechanical excavator with a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket. During the fieldwork all deposits exposed were observed and where necessary cleaned and partially excavated by hand. Drawn, written and photographic records were compiled according to standard service practice (CAS 1995). As also required in the brief all excavated material was scanned with a metal detector.

After the fieldwork, the artefacts were examined and recorded on a Microsoft Access 2000 database. Pottery was examined under x20 magnification and recorded by fabric type and form. Illustrations were prepared using an Adobe Illustrator package.

The project involved consulting a range of documentary sources for evidence relating to activity in the area of the proposed development and the surrounding area of the site. Records from the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record held by the Service were consulted as well as records held in the County Records Office.

Results

Fieldwork

The deposits encountered in the trenches formed a typical agricultural soil profile. Topsoil (contexts 101 and 201) was a firm mid grey brown silty clay and was between 0.2 and 0.35m in depth. There

was a large amount of modern material, mainly plastic agricultural refuse and scrap metal present in the top-soil and very few finds were recovered. A walk over the proposed development area, however, was rewarded with a single sherd of 17th century pottery, which was recovered from the vicinity of trench 2. The subsoil (contexts 102 and 202) comprised a firm light grey brown silty clay with occasional small to medium sub-rounded gravels and sat directly upon natural deposits between 0.35 and 0.55m. One sherd of 18th-19th century pottery was recovered from the subsoil in trench 2 (202). In both trenches the natural was extremely variable and undulated along the length of the trenches (contexts 103 and 203). The deposits observed ranged between light grey brown silty clay, much the same as the topsoil mixed with patches of brownish yellow sand and gravels and bluish grey clay. In both trenches periglacial features striated the natural. One of these was investigated in trench 1 to make sure it was not a ditch. At least three modern ceramic land drains were present in trench 1, these were all below the subsoil and all on the same north-east to south-west axis.

Context	Description	Interpretation	Depth below ground level
100	–	Excavated spoil from trench 1	–
101	Firm mid grey brown silty clay with few small subangular gravels	Topsoil in trench 1	0 – 0.35m
102	Firm light grey brown silty clay with occasional to medium sub-rounded gravels	Subsoil in trench 1	0.35 – 0.55m
103	Firm light grey brown silty clay, light brown/yellow sand and blueish grey clay	Natural in trench 1	>0.55m
104	As 102	Fill of 105	0.55 – 0.85m
105	Linear and parallel sided feature. West side is steep breaking shaply at base. East side is more gradually sloping	Periglacial feature	0.55 – 0.85m
200	–	Excavated spoil from trench 2	–
201	Firm mid grey brown silty clay with few small subangular gravels	Topsoil in trench 2	0 – 0.2m
202	Firm light grey brown silty clay with occasional to medium sub-rounded gravels	Subsoil in trench 2	0.2 – 0.35m
203	Firm light grey brown silty clay, light brown/yellow sand and blueish grey clay	Natural in trench 2	>0.35m

Table 1: Description of deposits

Artefacts (by Alan Jacobs)

The pottery assemblage retrieved from the excavated area consisted of four sherds of pottery weighing 53g, and in addition fragments of tile and land drain were recovered. The group came from three stratified contexts and could be dated from the medieval period onwards (see Table 1). Level of preservation was generally fair with the majority of sherds displaying only moderate levels of abrasion.

Material	Total	Weight (g)
Modern pottery (fabric 85)	1	2
Post-medieval pottery (fabric 78)	2	47
Medieval pottery (fabric 55)	1	4
Tile	1	4

Land drain	1	68
Total	6	125

Table 2: Quantification of the assemblage

All sherds have been grouped and quantified according to fabric type (see Table 2). A single diagnostic form sherd was present, and the other sherds were datable by fabric type to their general period or production span. The discussion below is a summary of the finds and associated location or contexts by period. Where possible, *terminus post quem* dates have been allocated and the importance of individual finds commented upon as necessary.

Only a single body sherd of Worcester type ware (fabric 55) was recovered from context 201. This was most probably a medieval cooking pot. A total of two sherds of post-medieval pottery were recovered both consisted post-medieval red sandy ware (fabric 78). The only form was a pancheon rim from context 101, the other sherd part of a small cup or vessel, and both of 17th-18th century date. The only modern pottery recovered consisted of a small fragment of modern stone china (fabric 85) possibly a small cup or vessel

A single fragment of medieval/post-medieval tile (fabric 2a: cf Hurst 1992) dating to the 13th-18th centuries was recovered from context 201, and a fragment of land drain (fabric 2c: cf Hurst 1912) from context 101.

In conclusion the small quality of finds makes this assemblage of very limited archaeological interest. The material represents very residual waste disposal in post-medieval and modern contexts.

Documentary research

The SMR search revealed that although there is no known previous settlement or activity relating to the proposed development site there an abundance of cropmarks in the vicinity representing a great deal of activity in the general area. Monuments; WSM 30489, WSM 27880 and WSM 30503 are all possible prehistoric settlement and enclosure sites and lie within 500m of the site. A field containing medieval ridge and furrow survives 400m to the west of the site at Bower's Hill Farm.

The 1815 enclosure map of the parish of Badsey shows the site as part of Bullybrook field. The map states the land was obtained by John Slater from Sarah Harrington for land at Claybrook. (Anon 1815).

Discussion

The archaeological evidence suggests that prehistoric and Roman activity in the area represented by the abundant cropmarks surrounding the site did not occur in the proposed area of development. There was no activity on the site until the later medieval period, and only a low level of activity in the 18th – 19th centuries. The sherds of pottery recovered likely represent the manuring of the field with muck containing domestic rubbish. The abundance of modern material in the topsoil represents continued and present use of the site as agricultural farmland.

Conclusions

The investigation of the site was conclusive. The absence of archaeological deposits and poverty of recovered artefacts suggests that although potentially significant deposits may be present in the surrounding area no activity, other than agriculture has occurred at the area in question. It can be stated, therefore, with a high degree of confidence that the proposed development of the site will not disturb and archaeological deposits of significance.

Publication summary

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on behalf of Mr and Mrs Maddaford at Bower's Hill Equestrian Centre, Badsey, Worcestershire (SP 0900 4174; WSM 34484). The evaluation was associated with an application to construct stables a ménage and access track. This required an archaeological response as the site is in an area with a high potential for significant archaeological deposits. The north-eastern corner of the site is the boundary between the three parishes of Badsey, Bretforton and Willersey and there are numerous cropmark enclosures surrounding Bower's Hill.

The evaluation involved a combination of fieldwork, artefactual analysis and documentary research. The fieldwork involved the excavation of two 50m trenches across the proposed site.

The results of the evaluation were conclusive. No archaeological deposits were present in either of the trenches suggesting a low potential for the site. This is corroborated by the poverty of artefacts recovered. It was apparent the site has always been open agricultural land with the 18th and 19th century finds representing waste disposal.

Archive

Fieldwork progress records AS2	1
Trench record sheets AS43	2
Photographic records AS3	1
Drawings	1
Digital photographs	1 CD rom

The project archive is intended to be placed at:	Worcestershire County Museum Hartlebury Castle, Hartlebury Near Kidderminster Worcestershire DY11 7XZ
telephone	01299 250416

Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Mr. Maddiford and Mr. E. Mumford

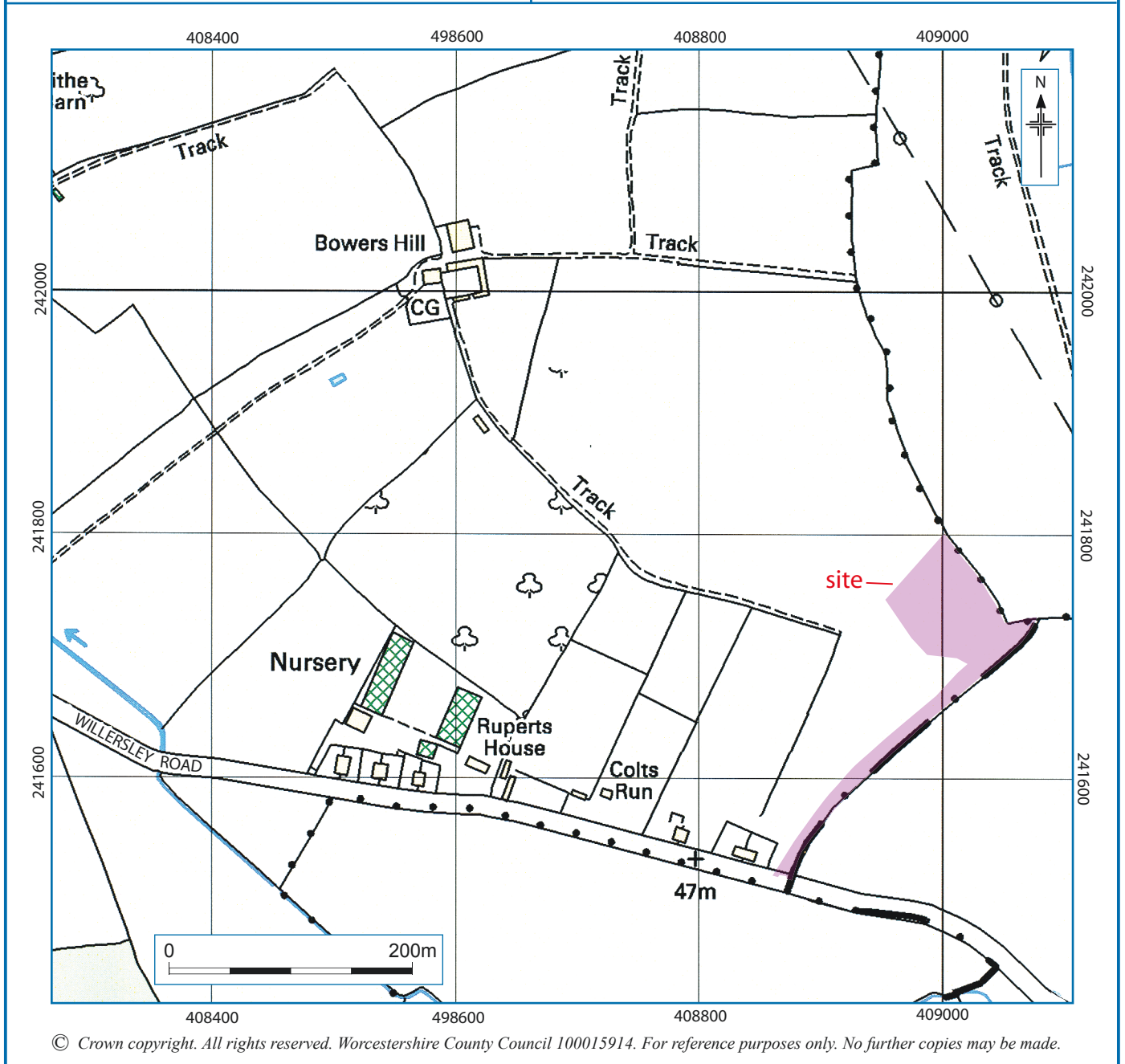
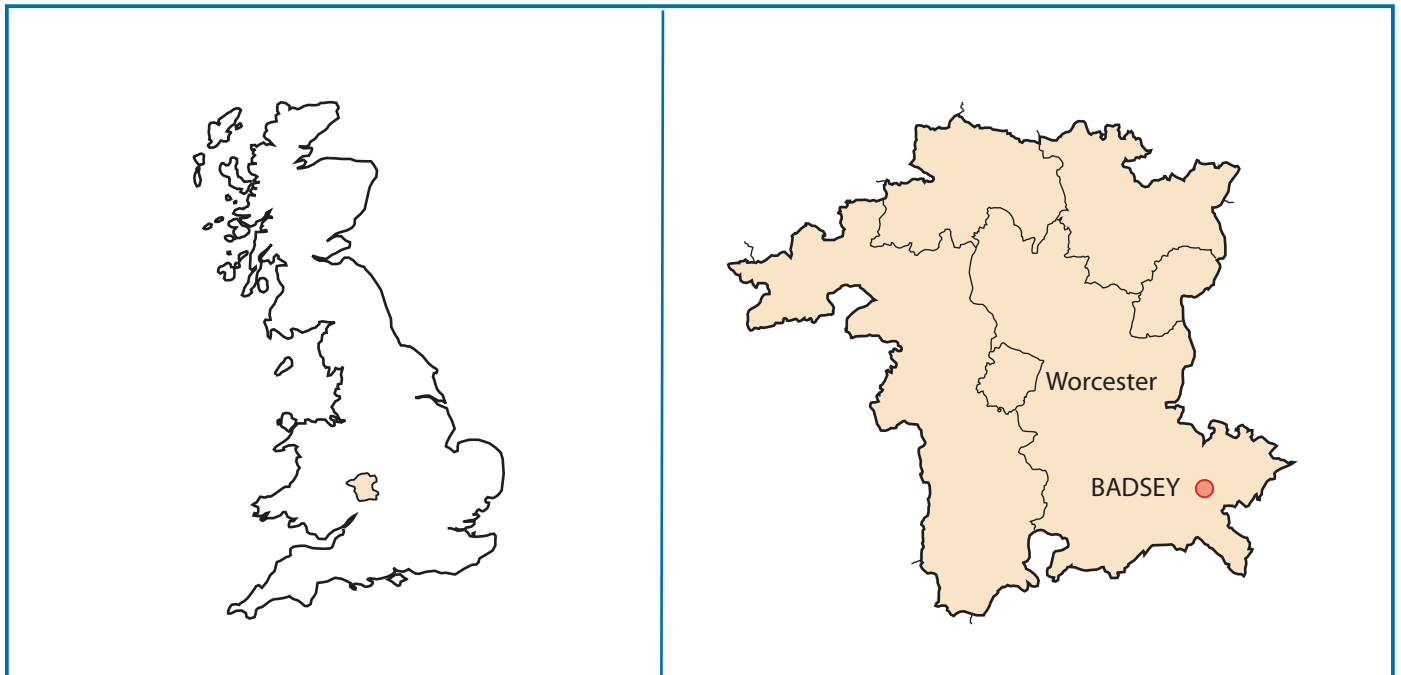
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Location of the site.

Figure 1

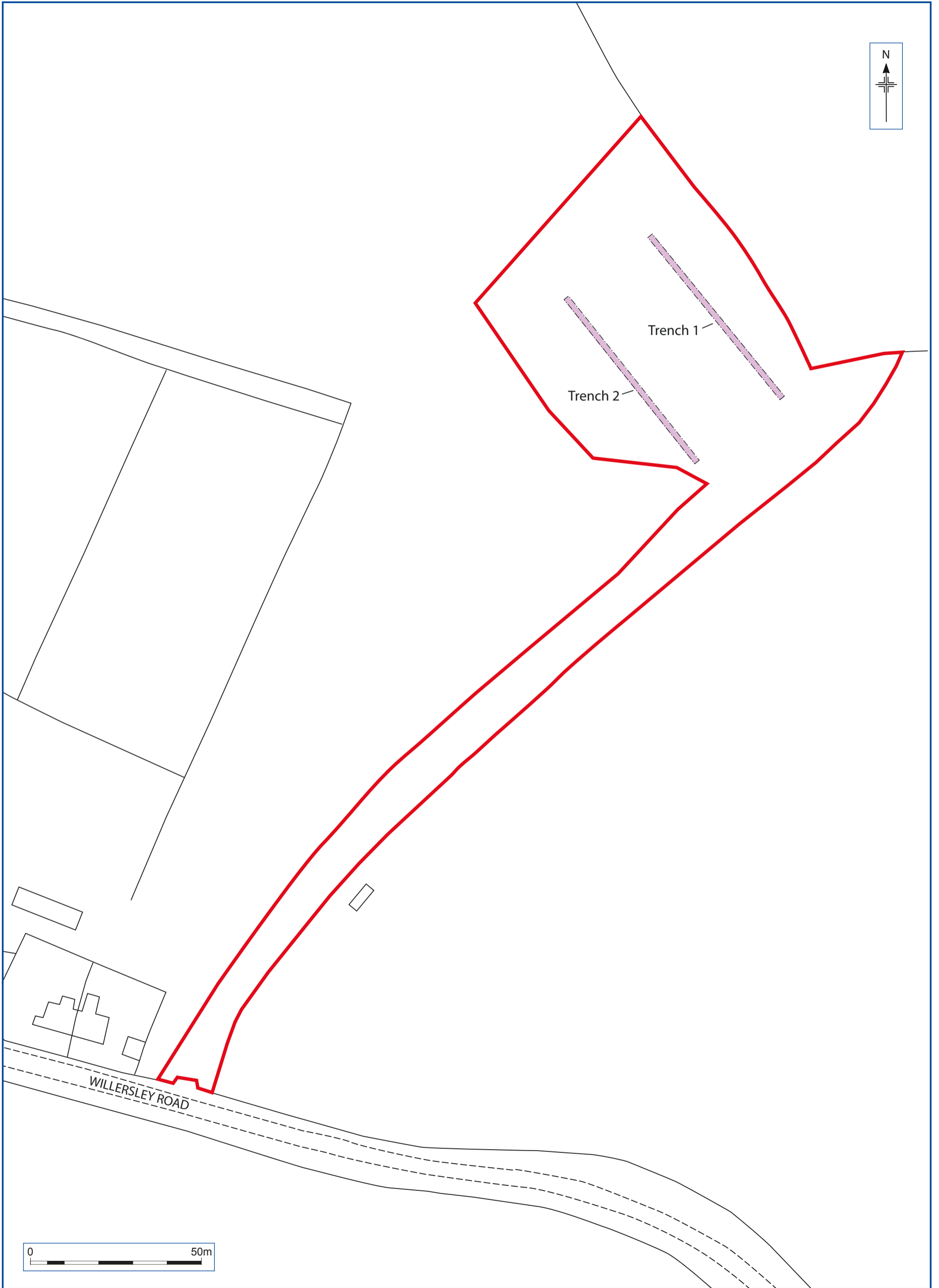




Plate 1: General shot of excavation of trench 1, facing north west from northeastern corner of site.



Plate 2: Post-excavation shot of periglacial feature in trench 1 (105), facing north.



Plate 3: General shot of trench 1, facing south east.



Plate 4: General shot of trench 2, facing south east.
