

ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
EVALUATION  
ON LAND OFF LEIGH ROAD,  
ALFRICK, WORCESTERSHIRE

James Goad

Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

9<sup>th</sup> February 2005

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Project 2686  
Report 1321  
WSM 34221

# Archaeological evaluation at land off Leigh Road, Alfrick, Worcestershire

**James Goad**

## Background information

<i>Client</i>	Draycott		Developments
<i>Site address</i>	Leigh		Road, Alfrick, Worcestershire
<i>National Grid reference</i>	SO		7502 5306
<i>Sites and Monuments Record reference</i>			WSM 34221
<i>Planning authority</i>	Malvern		Hills District Council
<i>reference</i>	M		H/04/1959
<i>Brief</i>			WHEAS 2005a
<i>Project design</i>	W		HEAS 2005b
<i>Project parameters</i>	IFA		1999

### *Previous archaeological work on the site*

There has been no previous archaeological work undertaken on site.

### *Archaeological and topographical background*

The soils on the site are part of the Wimple Series. These consist of argillic brown earths developed in thin medium loamy or medium silty drift overlying reddish clayey material passing to mudstones at depth. The clayey horizons are dense and slowly permeable and cause seasonal waterlogging. Under drainage is necessary for arable crops (Beard et al 1986).

The site is an area of land fronting on to the southern side of the Leigh Road. The field is part of the lower slope of a hill, the top of which lies 300m to the south and which is 18m higher than the study area. The site is bordered to the east by an open drainage ditch which feeds into a pond by the side of the road.

The proposed development lies in an area of medieval settlement, the current focus of which is the Norman church to the west (WSM 00465). An area of potential medieval occupation exists on the southern side of the village, to the south and east of the church (WSM 29259). The proposed area of development is just a short distance from these two recorded sites. The 1841 Tithe Map shows the study area as a field called "Chapel Meadow", with the tenant a William Hodges and the owner being a Mr John Morris. The historic Ordnance Survey maps similarly show the site as a field.

## Aims

The aims of the evaluation were to observe and record archaeological deposits, and to determine their extent, state of preservation, date and type, as far as reasonably possible.

## Methods

General specification for evaluation

CAS 1995

Sources consulted

SMR/HER

1841

Sources cited by the SMR/HER

Tithe Map

1885 Ordnance Survey Map, 1:2500

1904 Ordnance Survey Map, 1:2500

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Date(s) of fieldwork	8	<sup>th</sup> February 2005
Area of deposits observed		c 105m <sup>2</sup> (4% sample). Indicated on Figure 1
Dimensions of excavated areas observed		Trench 1
width		length 40m
depth		dth 1.50m
Trench	2	length 20m
width		dth 1.50m
depth		0.35-1.00m
Trench	3	length 12m
width		dth 1.50m
depth		0.30m

#### *Access to or visibility of deposits*

Observation of the excavated areas was undertaken during/after machine excavation. The exposed surfaces were sufficiently clean to observe well differentiated archaeological deposits. Selected areas were cleaned by hand.

#### *Statement of confidence*

Access to, and visibility of, deposits allowed a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

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### **Discussion**

Three trenches were excavated on the site to fulfil the requirements of the brief. The first trench was excavated close to and parallel to the Leigh Road, which was probably the optimum area for settlement in the medieval period. Two smaller trenches were excavated within the field (Figure 1).

No trace of any archaeological structures, features or deposits were located within the trenches. All three trenches were consistent in that they were very shallow, being rarely more than 0.35m in depth down to the top of the natural clay. The depth of the topsoil was invariably between 0.10-0.25m. In between the topsoil and the natural was an interface layer, as it didn't seem like much of a standard subsoil. There was some variation in the natural clay throughout the trenches. On the western side of Trench 1 the clay was light yellowy grey, like it was throughout Trench 3. However, Trench 2 had a reddish brown clay with pockets of light blue coloured clay. The eastern half of Trench 1 revealed a light grey brown clay.

The surface of the field was very wet after some rainfall. The nature of the underlying geology meant water either ran off the surface downhill or stood in puddles. Local information indicated frequent flooding and closure of Leigh Road just to the east of the site. During the trenching there was no sign of any field drains of any period to facilitate the drainage of the field.

Some metal artefacts (subsequently discarded) were found in the topsoil by a metal-detecting survey during the project. These included iron nails and a horseshoe, which dated from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards. One of the nails was possibly used for shoeing the horses (Angus Crawford pers comm).

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### **Conclusions**

The total absence of archaeological features in all three trenches points to the fact there has been no settlement on this site.

The ground conditions point to the fact the study area has never been an ideal choice for settlement as it's simply too wet. With any moderate downfall the surface becomes extremely wet and the water can't drain away like it does on sandy gravels. Alfrick appears to have always been a small settlement, and the labour required to drain such a large area for the benefit of such a small village would have been totally out of proportion to the labour available. The land probably hasn't been used for arable crops either. The depth of topsoil and total absence of plough marks indicates the field has never been subject to intensive ploughing. Any arable farming on clay soils requires deep ploughing and frequent drainage – both features that are totally absent from this part of the field. The presence of horseshoes and shodding nails indicates that the land has been pastoral since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century at least (also indicated by the name from the Tithe Map), and probably was throughout the medieval period.

This part of the modern village would appear not to have any significant archaeology present. The main area of potential being the zone slightly to the west, adjacent to the church.

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### 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 Draycott Developments at land fronting on to Leigh Road, Alfrick, Worcestershire (NGR SO 7502 5306; WSM 34221). Several trenches were opened up across the study area to evaluate the site for archaeological remains. No significant archaeology was detected in any of the three trenches. All the available evidence regarding the ground conditions pointed to the fact that this land had probably always been used for pasture.*

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### Archive

Fieldwork progress records AS2	1
Drawings	1
Digital photographs	12
The project archive is intended to be placed at:	Worcestershire County Museum
	Castle, Hartlebury
	Near Kidderminster
	Worcestershire DY11 7XZ
	250416
Telephone	01299

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### Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Jeremy Robinson of Draycott Developments and Mike Glyde (WHEAS).

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### Bibliography

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Beard, G R, Cope, D W, Jones, R J A, Palmer, R C and Whitfield, W A D 1986 *Soils of Worcester and the Malvern Hills District*, Soil Survey of Great Britain, Sheet **150**

CAS 1995 (as amended) *Manual of Service practice: fieldwork recording manual*, County Archaeological Service, Hereford and Worcester County Council, report, **399**

IFA, 1999 *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation*, Institute of Field Archaeologists

WHEAS 2005a *Brief for an archaeological evaluation at land fronting Leigh Road, Alfrick, Worcestershire* Historic Environment and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council unpublished document dated January 2005

WHEAS 2005b *Proposal for an archaeological evaluation at Leigh Road, Alfrick, Worcestershire*, Historic Environment and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished document dated 6<sup>th</sup> January 2005, **P2686**

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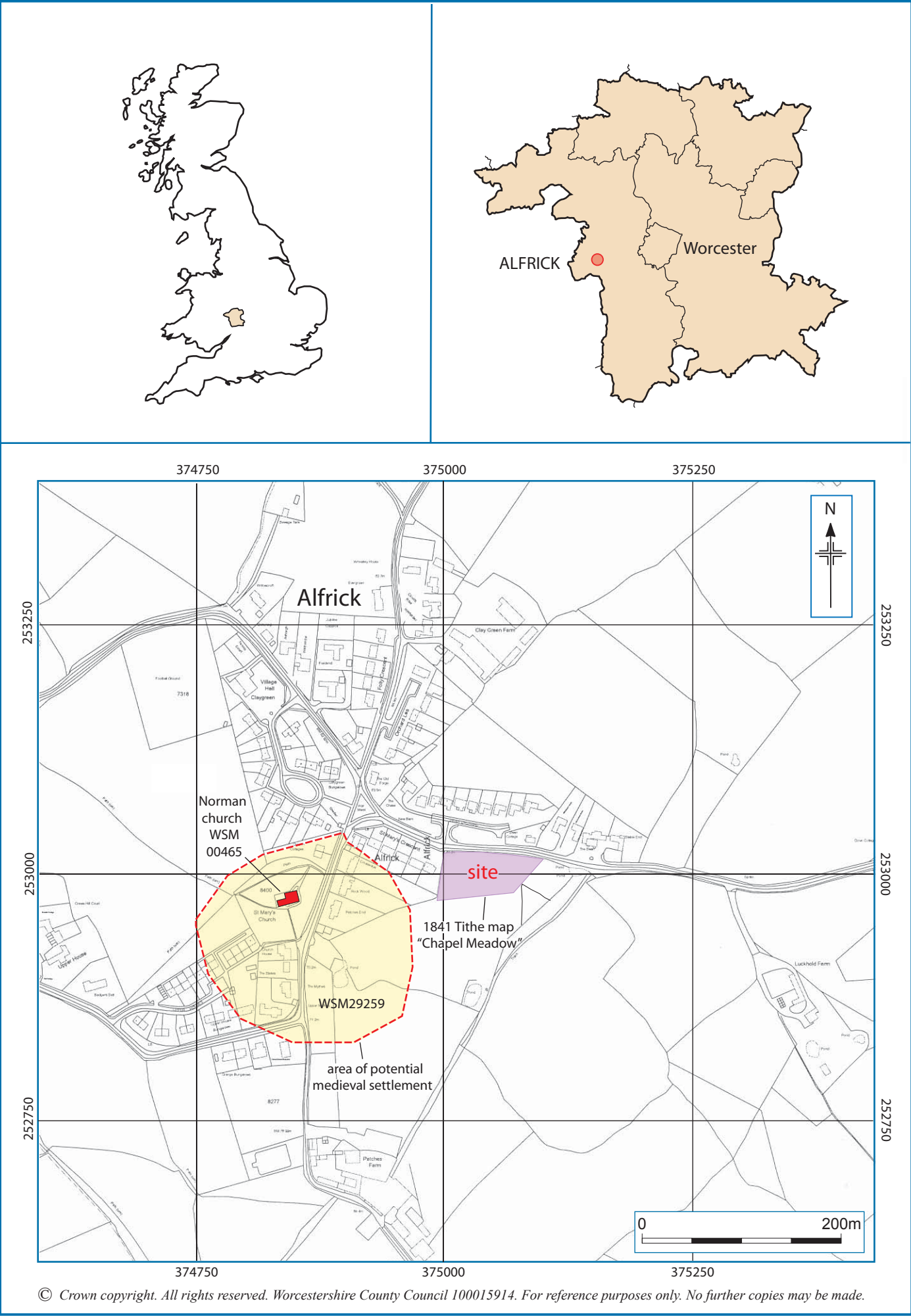


*Plate 1: Looking north down Trench 2*





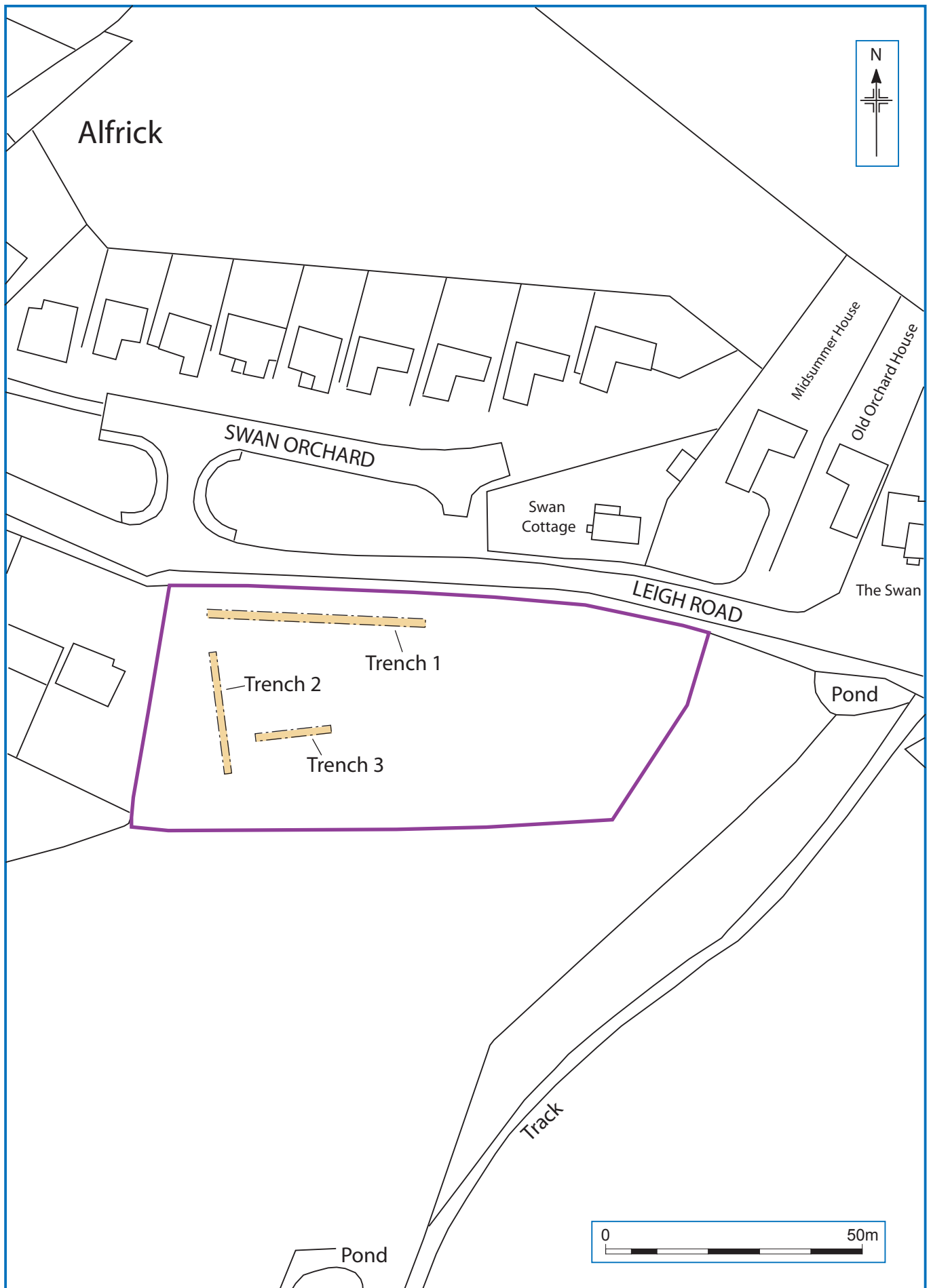
*Plate 2: Looking west down length of Trench 3*



Location of the site.

Figure 1





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Trench location plan

Figure 2

## ***Drawing\_Register***

<b><i>Drawing_No</i></b>	<b><i>Drawing_type</i></b>	<b><i>Context_No</i></b>	<b><i>Description</i></b>
1	Plan (other)	100	location plan of the 3 trenches

Context\_Register

Trench 3 north ssdsisjil

Context_No	Context_type	Feature_type	Colour	Texture	Consistency	Fill_of_(1)	Primary_Fill	Notes
100 layer. 0.15m	Layer	Topsoil	Brown	Sandy loam	Friable	0	0	thin topsoil  in depth
101 natural 0.22m in	Layer	Subsoil	Light Brown	Clay loam	Friable	0	0	interface btwn and topsoil.  depth
102 obvious features	Layer	Natural	Brown/Grey	Silty clay	Friable	0	0	natural . no archaeological in it
200	Layer	Topsoil	Brown	Sandy loam	Friable	0	0	topsoil

<i>Context_No</i>	<i>Context_type</i>	<i>Feature_type</i>	<i>Colour</i>	<i>Texture</i>	<i>Consistency</i>	<i>Fill_of_(1)</i>	<i>Primary_Fill</i>	<i>Notes</i>
201	Layer	Subsoil	Light Brown	Sandy clay	Friable	0	0	subsoil
202	Layer	Natural	Reddy/Brown	Clay loam	Friable	0	0	natural . no archaeological or layers
300	Layer	Topsoil	Brown	Sandy loam	Friable	0	0	topsoil. 0.22m
301	Layer	Subsoil	Yellow/Brown	Clay loam	Friable	0	0	0.12m in depth



<i>Context_No</i>	<i>Context_type</i>	<i>Feature_type</i>	<i>Colour</i>	<i>Texture</i>	<i>Consistency</i>	<i>Fill_of_(1)</i>	<i>Primary_Fill</i>	<i>Notes</i>
302	Layer	Natural	light grey	Clay loam	Friable	0	0	light natural
like								northern end of
trench 1.								must be a
band of								lighter clay
traversing								the field. no archaeological
features								or deposits
noticed								

# ***Photographic\_Register***

## ***Photo\_Shot\_number Context\_No Description***

1	100	general view field looking west
2	100	looking west down trench 1
3	100	looking west down trench 1
4	100	looking east down trench 1
5	100	northern section of trench 1
6	200	looking south down trench 2
7	200	looking north down trench 2
8	300	looking east down trench 3
9	300	looking west down trench 3
10	300	backfilled trench 3
11	200	backfilled trench 2
12	100	backfilled trench 1