

An archaeological fieldwalking evaluation at Church Farm, Alresford, Essex

October 2001

**on behalf of
Alresford Sand and Ballast Co Ltd**

NGR: TM 0630 2075 centre
Site code: ALCF01
Colchester Museum accession code: 2001.213



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CAT Report 162
November 2001

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EHCR summary sheet

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1 Summary

Fieldwalking over an approximately 3 hectare plot (74 boxes = 2.96 ha) west of Church Farm, Alresford, Essex recovered very low weights of archaeological material. There were no significant concentrations.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 This is the report on an archaeological fieldwalking evaluation at Church Farm, Alresford, Essex (NGR TM 0630 2075 centre; Fig 1).
- 2.2 The work was carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on behalf of Alresford Sand and Ballast Co Ltd, on the 11th and 1st November 2001. Post-excavation work was carried out from 15th to 19th October 2001. All work was carried out according to a brief agreed with Essex County Council Heritage Advice Management and Promotion (HAMP).
- 2.3 Proposed work is the regrading of a field adjacent to an area of mineral extraction.

3 Archaeological background

- 3.1 The site lies close to the ruined St Peter's Church (Essex Heritage Conservation Record 2382-2383). Any medieval church site in Essex has the potential to be the location of early medieval and perhaps Saxon settlement. In some cases, the presence of Roman brick or tile in the church fabric shows that somewhere in the vicinity there was a Roman building which was used as a source of materials when the church was built. In fact, a **Roman** villa site is known from 500m to the south-west (EHCR 2115). There is evidence of **Saxon** activity, ie a probable Saxon barrow cemetery 500m to the south-east (EHCR 1902-1908). The principal evidence of **medieval** activity is St Peter's Church itself (EHCR 2382-2383).
- 3.2 A previous fieldwalking survey revealed low densities of prehistoric worked flint and burnt flint, but with no concentrations. One piece of possible Roman tile was collected, but there was no medieval material (Brooks 1994).

4 Aim

The aim of the fieldwalking evaluation was to locate previously unknown archaeological sites by means of surface finds.

5 Methodology

- 5.1 The fieldwalking was carried out to the standard Essex methodology, as used generally in Essex since 1985 and as outlined in Medlycott and Germany (1994). This consisted of a 10% sample collected in 2m corridors in 20m collection units.
- 5.2 The whole survey area fell within a single kilometre square (A), and included hectares A18-A19, A27-A29, A37-A39 with A47 also falling within the survey area (numbered from box A1 at the notional south-east corner of the kilometre). A total of 74 boxes were walked, giving a survey of a fraction under 3 hectares (Fig 2).

6 Results

- 6.1 The following types of finds were collected: prehistoric flint, medieval pottery, post-medieval pottery, modern pottery, clay tobacco-pipe fragments, peg-tile, post-medieval and modern brick, and post-medieval and modern glass. The first four of those finds groups are discussed below, and statistical analysis is given in section 7

below. The other finds groups are listed in the site archive but are not discussed below. The following finds have not been retained: peg-tile.

- 6.2** Using the spreadsheet facility in Microsoft Works, each finds type has been calculated in such a way that the period plans (Figs 3-5 here) show groups of finds in below average (-average) above average (+average), above 1 standard deviation over the mean (+1 sd) and above 2 sd's above the norm (+2 sd). By common convention in the Essex fieldwalking system, a single box with finds of +2 sd is not a significant cluster, but two such adjacent boxes are a significant cluster and represent a previously unknown archaeological site.

6.3 Prehistoric finds

6.3.1 Struck flints (Fig 3)

total collected:	1 flake (1g)
average weight per 20m box:	0.014g
County average:	1.447g

One class of prehistoric material was recovered: struck flint. There was only one piece, giving an average weight per box of 0.014g. No sensible comments can be made about such low weights of material.

6.4 Medieval finds

One class of medieval find was collected, ie pottery.

6.4.1 Pottery (Fig 4)

total collected:	2 sherds (30g)
average weight per 20m box:	0.045g
County average:	1.447g

There were only two medieval sherds at a total weight of 30g. They were found at the church side of the area, where (on a simple level) one might expect medieval activity around the medieval church.

6.5 Post-medieval and modern finds

6.5.1 Pottery (Fig 4)

total collected:	2 sherds (10g)
average weight per 20m box:	0.135g
County average:	4.363g (post-medieval and modern)

Post-medieval pottery was collected, but at a fraction of the county figure.

It is conventional wisdom to interpret this post-medieval pottery as 'manure scatter' material (brought out with the farmyard manure and spread onto the fields by accident), rather than being derived from below-ground archaeological sites. There is no reason to dispute this idea here.

6.5.2 Modern pottery (Fig 4)

total collected:	9 sherds (71g)
average weight per 20m box:	0.959g
County average:	4.363g (post-medieval and modern)

A large group of modern pottery was collected, but at a fraction of the county figure.

This modern pottery is usually interpreted as 'manure scatter'. There is no reason to dispute this idea here.

6.5.3 Peg-tile (Fig 5)

total collected:	43 pieces (836g)
average weight per 20m box:	11.297g
County average:	61.381g

Although it may seem pointless to collect peg-tile, it is picked up in case it should turn out to be Roman brick or tile. The total collected is quite small, at about one half of the county average. The peg-tile is distributed fairly evenly across the survey area. Peg-tile is clearly from the roof of a nearby house or farm. There are two major buildings close by – the hall site and Church Farm itself, and the peg-tile could be derived from either of these sources as 'manure scatter'.

6.6 Fieldwalking conclusions

The post-medieval and modern material gathered in this survey (pottery and peg-tile) is almost certainly the result of manuring operations over the last three or four centuries, and probably has no other significance.

The low weight of medieval pottery is a surprise, in view of the site's proximity to the medieval church of St Peter. There was a single struck flint, but absolutely no Roman finds. This again is a surprise, because there is usually a little Roman material on most Essex fields. There is a Roman villa site in the quarry 1km south of the collection area, but perhaps we are too far away to be certain of picking up debris from that site. Without pushing the limited evidence too far, one wonders whether the absence of Roman material is good negative evidence against this area being in cultivation in Roman times and in favour of an interpretation that it was woodland or pasture.

7 Statistical information

Key:

n	= number of 20m boxes walked
Ex	= total weight of individual finds type (ie Roman potsherds)
Ex2	= sum of weight of individual finds individually squared
μ	= average weight of finds type per 20m box
σ	= standard deviation
+1 σ	= +1 sd weight
+2 σ	= +2 sd weight

Struck flint

n	74
Ex	1
Ex2	1
μ	0.014
σ	0.000
+1 σ	0.014
+2 σ	0.014

Medieval pottery

n	74
Ex	30
Ex2	900
μ	0.045
σ	0.000
+1 σ	0.045
+2 σ	0.811

Post-medieval pottery

n	74
Ex	10
Ex2	52
μ	0.135
σ	1.000
+1 σ	1.135
+2 σ	2.135

Modern pottery

n	74
Ex	71
Ex2	1201
μ	0.959
σ	8.447
+1 σ	9.407
+2 σ	17.854

Peg-tile (medieval and post-medieval)

n	74
Ex	836
Ex2	50622
μ	11.297
σ	28.736
+1 σ	40.034
+2 σ	68.770

8 References

- Brooks, H, 1994 Archaeological fieldwalking at Church Farm, Alresford, Essex, unpublished client report
- Medlycott, M, 1994 'Archaeological fieldwalking in Essex: interim results & Germany, M, 1985-93', *Essex Archaeology and History*, **25**, 14-28

9 Acknowledgements

Thanks to Alresford Sand and Ballast Co for commissioning the work (Mr Peter Orrock). Site work was undertaken by David Sims and Don Goodman. Finds identification was by Stephen Benfield and Howard Brooks.

10 Archive deposition

The site archive will be permanently deposited with Colchester Museum under accession code 2001.213.

Howard Brooks, November 2001

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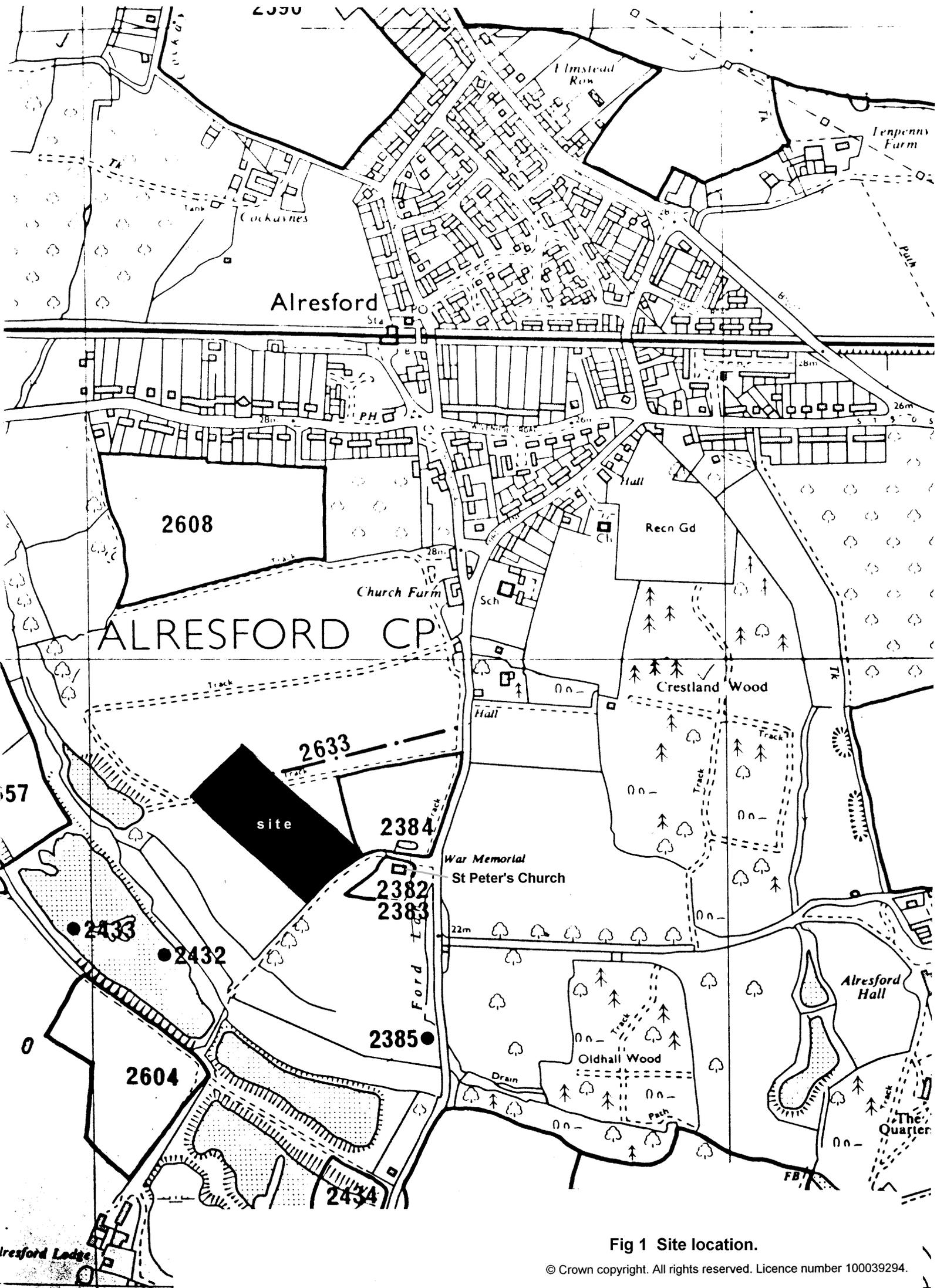


Fig 1 Site location.

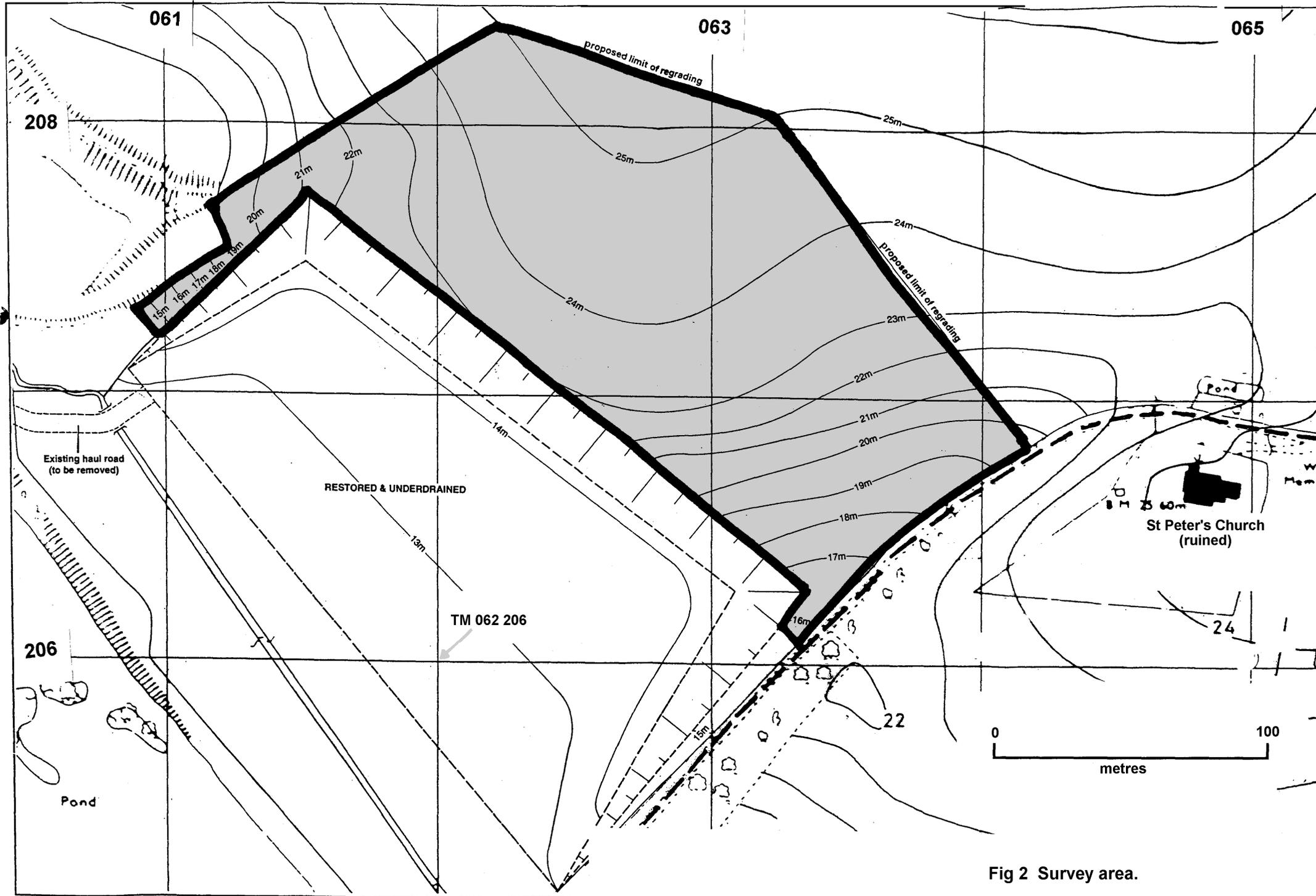


Fig 2 Survey area.

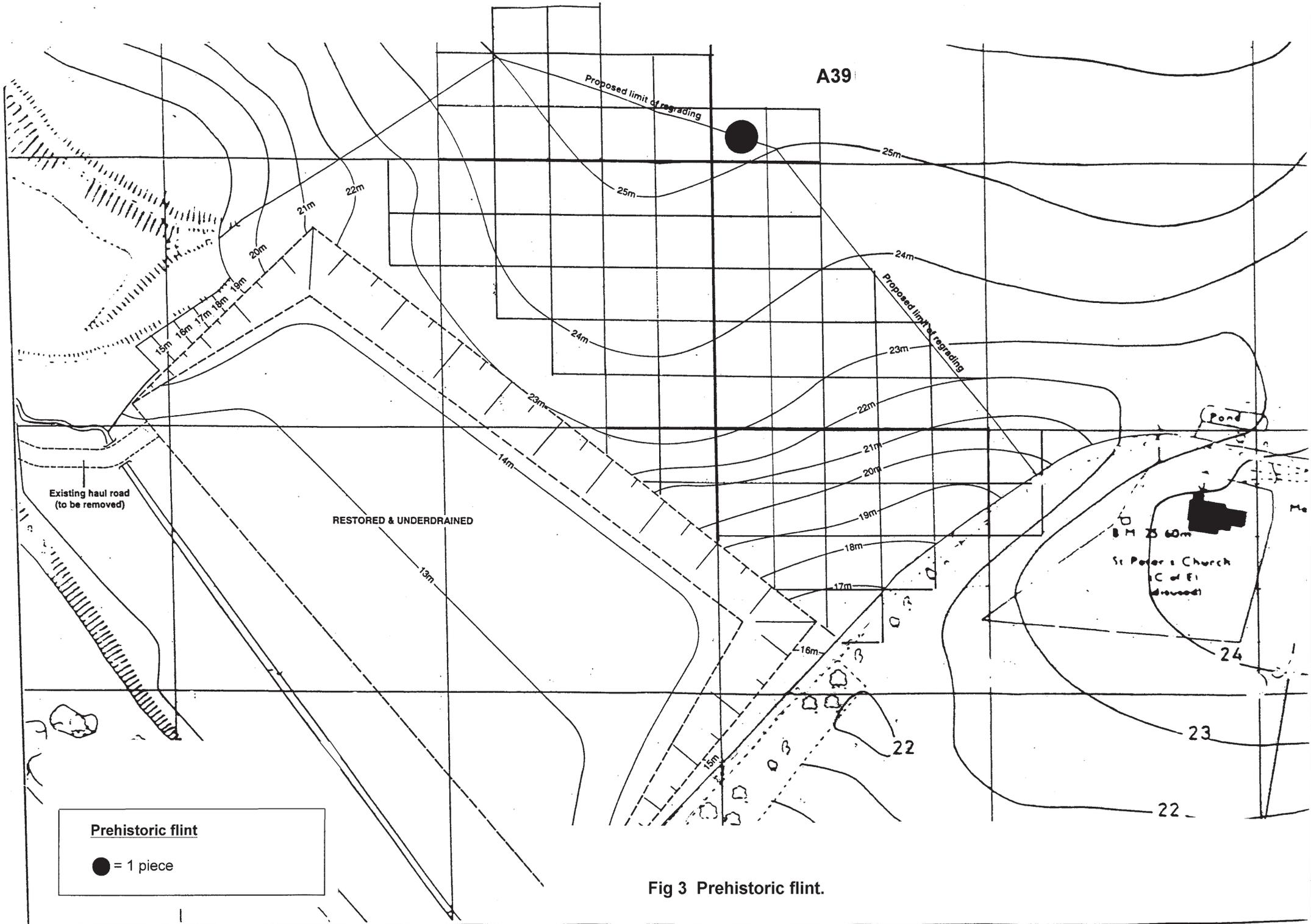


Fig 3 Prehistoric flint.

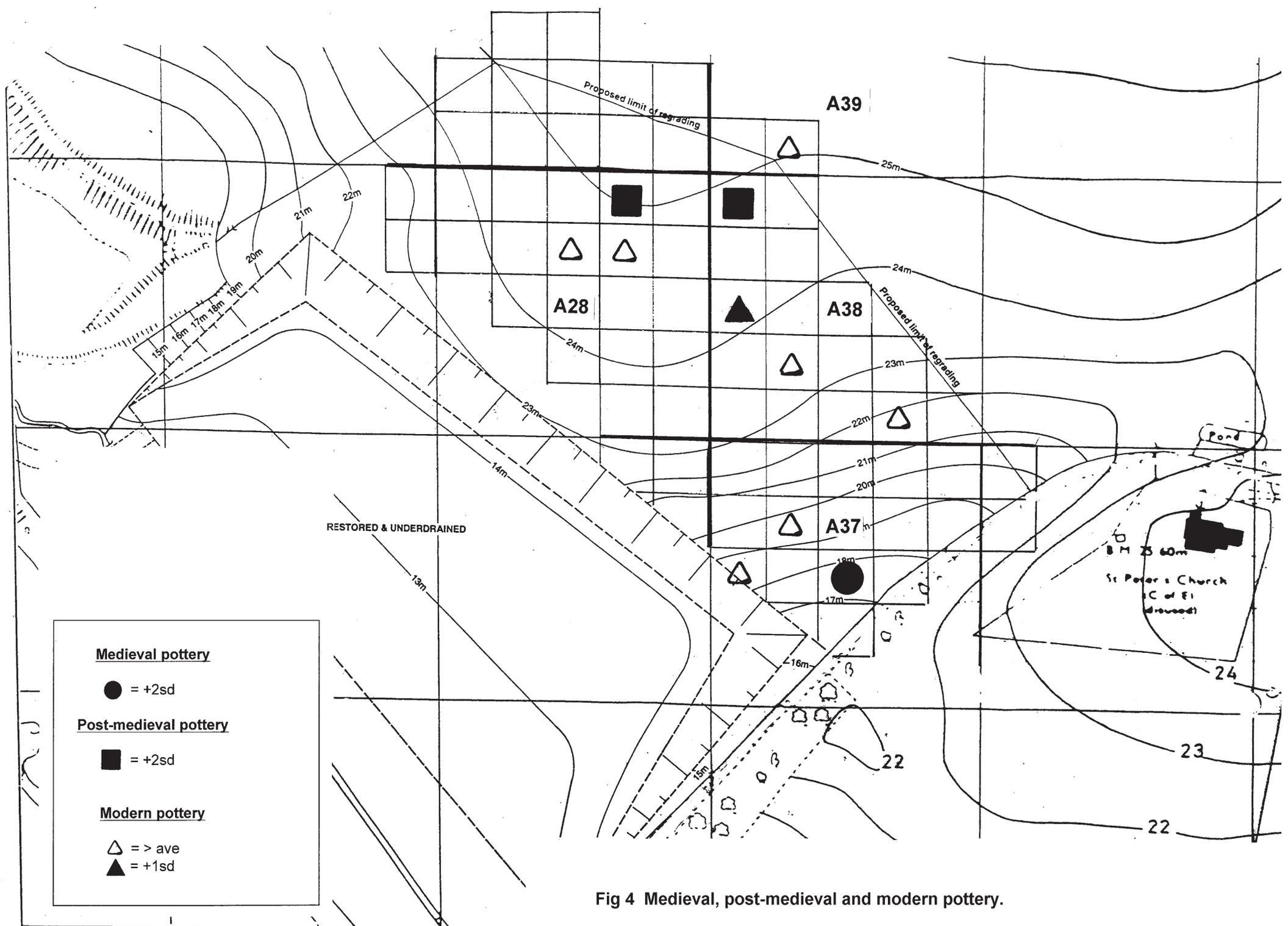
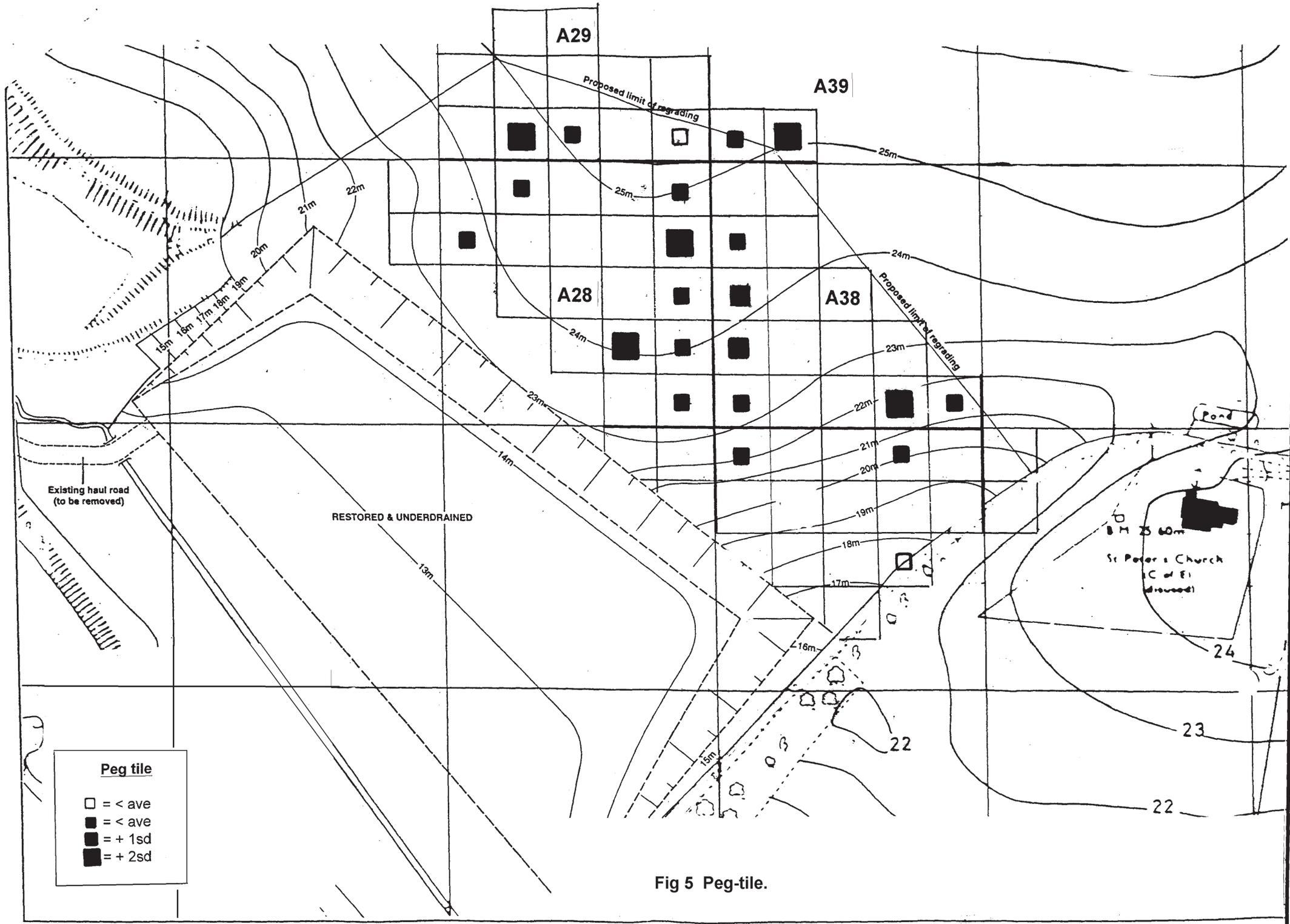


Fig 4 Medieval, post-medieval and modern pottery.



A29

A39

A28

A38

Existing haul road
(to be removed)

RESTORED & UNDERDRAINED

B.M. 560m

St Peter's Church
(C of E)
(ground)

Pond

Peg tile

- = < ave
- = < ave
- = + 1sd
- = + 2sd

Fig 5 Peg-tile.

**Essex Sites and Monuments Record/
Essex Archaeology and History**

Summary sheet

Site name/address: Church Farm, Alresford, Essex	
Parish: Alresford	District: Tendring
NGR: TM 0630 2065 (centre)	Site code: ALCF 01
Type of work: Fieldwalking evaluation	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: October 2001	Size of area investigated: 3 hectares
Location of finds/curating museum: Colchester Museum (accession 2001.213)	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? Yes (excavation)	Related SMR nos: 2382-2383, 2115, 1902-1908
Final report: CAT Report 162 and summary in <i>EAH</i>	
Periods represented: Medieval and later	
Summary of fieldwork results: Fieldwalking over an approximately 3 hectare plot (74 boxes = 2.96 ha) west of Church Farm, Alresford, Essex recovered very low weights of archaeological material. There were no significant concentrations.	
Previous summaries/reports: None	
Author of summary: Howard Brooks	Date of summary: November 2001