OAKLEY VALE
CORBY
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

RESULTS OF
FIELD ARTEFACT COLLECTION SURVEY

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Project OVC749

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Preface

Every effort has been made in the preparation and submission of this document and all statements are offered in good faith. Albion Archaeology cannot accept responsibility for errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by a third party, or from any other loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in this document.

This project was directed by Jeremy Oetgen (Project Officer), under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Projects Manager). Field artefact collection was undertaken by Paul Gelderd, David Leigh, Patrick Kent and Robert Marigold-Smith (Archaeological Technicians), and Tracy Preece (Archaeological Technician) and was supervised by Julian Watters (Archaeological Supervisor). GPS surveying was carried out by Martin Edwards (Land and Engineering Surveyor, Mouchel TSC). The pottery report was prepared by Anna Slowikowski (Ceramic Artefacts Manager) and non-ceramic artefact report, by Holly Duncan (Non-ceramic Artefacts Manager). Joan Lightning (CAD Technician) produced the artefact plots. This report was written by Julian Watters.

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Definition of terms used within this report

Development Area – The area of proposed development

Study Area – The area to be archaeologically evaluated.

GPS – Global Positioning System

CAO – County Archaeological Officer, Northamptonshire Heritage

SMR – Sites and Monuments Record

Non-technical summary

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Cofton Ltd to carry out a scheme of archaeological works on land to the south of Corby. This work was instigated on the advice of Northamptonshire Heritage and aimed to establish the archaeological potential of the site at Oakley Vale. The Field Artefact Collection Survey was part of this work and was designed to identify areas of potential archaeological importance.

The total study area covered 70ha. The south-western part of this area (approximately 10ha in extent) was deemed unsuitable for artefact collection due to being in pastoral use. A further 2ha of the study area, located to the north of Oakley Grange, had not been ploughed at the time of the survey and will need to be examined at a later date.

Two main areas of archaeological interest were identified. The first was focused on a plateau towards the middle of the survey area where a scatter of flint tools, waste flakes and occasional pieces of burnt flint, all of prehistoric date, were noted.

The second area was located on the western edge of the site and consisted of a dispersed scatter of medieval pottery.

Structure of the report

The report is divided into four sections. Section 1 provides a background to the project and gives details concerning the nature of the study area. In Section 2 the objectives of field artefact collection are discussed, along with the methodology of the survey. Section 3 records the results of the survey and in Section 4 these results are discussed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

Corby Borough Council and Great Oakley Farms Ltd applied for outline planning consent to develop a new neighbourhood on 184ha of land to the south of Corby. A *Desk-based Assessment*[1] of the proposed development area was undertaken by John Samuels Archaeological Consultants.

The study revealed that the northern part of the development area – approximately 60% of the total area – had been quarried for ironstone and was no longer held any remains of archaeological significance. The remaining 70ha, consisting mainly of arable farmland, was identified as having potential for yielding archaeological material from a range of periods.

On the basis of this report an *Archaeological Evaluation Brief*[2] was issued by Northamptonshire Heritage, detailing a suggested scheme of investigation for the site. The scheme comprised three main stages:

1. Historic documentary survey
2. Field survey (by non-intrusive techniques)
3. Trial trenching

Albion Archaeology subsequently prepared a *Project Design*[3] for these investigations, which was approved by Northamptonshire's CAO.

Stage 1 has been undertaken by a specialist consultant, David Hall MA FSA MIFA, and the results are to be conveyed in a separate report[4]. Stage 3 will commence following completion of Stages 1–2 and the agreement of a detailed strategy with the CAO.

1.1.1 Field Survey

Stage 2 of the archaeological investigation strategy outlined in the *Brief* consisted of a field survey comprising three techniques:

- Geophysical Survey
- Field Artefact Collection
- Metal Detecting

A Geophysical survey was undertaken by Archaeological Services of West Yorkshire Archaeology Service (ASWYAS) and is the subject of a separate report[5].

[1] Samuels, J; *A Desk-based Archaeological Assessment on land at Oakley Grange, Corby, Northamptonshire*; 1998.
[2] Kidd, A. M; *Oakley Grange, Corby. Planning Application. Archaeological Evaluation Brief*, Northamptonshire Heritage; 1998.
[3] Wilson, M; *Oakley Grange, Corby, Northamptonshire. Scheme of Archaeological Investigation for Archaeological Field Evaluation*; Albion Archaeology; 2001.

[4] Hall, D; [Historical documentary survey]; forthcoming.
[5] ASWYAS; *Geophysical Survey. Oakley Vale, Corby, Northamptonshire*; Report No.937; 2001

The Field Artefact Collection Survey was carried out between 22nd and 26th October 2001 by Albion Archaeology.

The *Brief* also specified that a metal detector survey should be undertaken in the vicinity of any Roman, medieval or Saxon sites identified by Field Artefact Collection or geophysical survey. The strategy for this survey therefore depends on the results presented in these respective reports.

1.2 Study area

The Oakley Vale site lies on the boulder clay plateau in the Rockingham Forest area of Northamptonshire (Figure1). Harpers Brook, a tributary of the River Nene, forms the southern boundary of the site. A minor stream flows in a southerly direction across the site and into Harpers Brook. The land to the north of the study area was extensively quarried during the last century.

The total study area measured approximately 70ha in extent. 10ha of this area, lying to the south-west was in pastoral use and, after discussion with the client and CAO, it was decided that this land would not be fieldwalked. A further 2ha of the study area, lying to the north of Oakley Grange, will need to be surveyed at a later date, as ground conditions here had prevented ploughing. In addition to this, the land occupied by Oakley Grange, along with a patch of unploughed land measuring a third of a hectare, at the south end of the site, were unavailable for fieldwalking (Figure 1).

1.3 Archaeological background

A detailed account of previous archaeological work and finds in the area can be found in the *Desk-based Assessment*. In summary, the immediate area around the Oakley Vale site has, in the past, produced material ranging in date from the Neolithic to post-medieval periods. In the *Brief* it was stated that the potential of the site for yielding material of an Iron Age, Roman, or medieval date, in particular, was high. Figure 2 shows the location of SMR sites in the vicinity of Oakley Vale.

Although four sites are recorded within the development area, three of these lay in the area destroyed by quarrying (*see* Table 1). The only SMR recorded site within the Study Area is Oakley Grange itself (SMR 5282); however, the *Desk-based Assessment* concludes that this farm complex is of 19th century origin[6].

[6] op.cit., p.9

2. METHOD STATEMENT

2.1 Objectives

Field artefact collection, or *fieldwalking,* is commonly applied during the early stages of archaeological investigation and seeks to highlight areas of potential archaeological interest. Constant ploughing tends to disturb buried archaeological sites, lifting archaeological material into the ploughsoil. Through systematic collection of artefacts from recently ploughed land it is possible to identify concentrations, which may be indicative of areas of past human occupation or activity. The identification of any such concentrations is likely to have an impact upon any subsequent excavation strategy.

2.2 Artefact categories

The aim of the survey was to collect any manufactured objects. The main artefact groups likely to be encountered were:

- Pottery
- Tile and ceramic building material (CBM)
- Flint tools or burnt flint
- Glass
- Metal objects

As stated in the *Project Design*, any modern artefacts and building material of a post-medieval date would not be subject to total collection but, instead, the extent of any spreads would be mapped and a representative sample taken.

Also, in accordance with the *Brief*, attention would be paid to locating and mapping any spreads of charcoal or slag.

2.3 Methodological constraints

2.3.1 General

In order to undertake a meaningful fieldwalking survey it is important that the soil conditions are suitable. Where ploughing has only recently taken place, for example, the ground may not have had sufficient time to weather and, as a result, artefacts may be more difficult to see. Similarly, where ploughed land has been left for some time vegetation will begin to grow, potentially decreasing the visibility of finds.

2.3.2 Soil preparation in advance of the Oakley Vale survey

The majority of the Study Area is normally under arable cultivation, but the landowner, Great Oakley Farms, did not intend to plough the land during the autumn 2001 season. To enable Field Artefact Collection to take place as scheduled, Great Oakley Farms kindly agreed to undertake an operation

known as 'disc-and-press' on areas to be walked. This operation tills the soil leaving it in a condition roughly equivalent to that after ploughing and weathering. To confirm the suitability of the ground conditions, a trial area was disc-and-pressed for the inspection of the CAO and Albion Archaeology's Project Officer on 19th September 2001. It was agreed that soil conditions in the trial area were almost ideal and that fieldwalking could take place following the disc-and-pressing of the whole Study Area.

2.3.3 Variability of factors affecting collection across the Study Area

Inevitably, given the size of the Oakley Vale site, there was some variation in the level of visibility across different parts of the study area. Overall, however, soil conditions were conducive to the completion of a meaningful survey and it would seem unlikely that many artefacts were missed. Weather conditions were also helpful, being dry and bright for most of the week.

2.4 Methodology

The field artefact collection survey was carried out in accordance with the *Brief* and the *Project Design*. This was to be undertaken in two stages – collection of artefacts from the whole available area followed, if necessary, by intensive collection of selected areas.

2.4.1 Global Positioning System (GPS) survey

To guide the fieldwalkers a 100m grid corresponding to the Ordnance Survey grid was installed across the 58ha site using the GPS system. The GPS was also used to plot, with a high degree of accuracy, the exact location of all finds recovered.

Spot heights, related to the Ordnance Datum, were logged simultaneously on all survey points. The data was then processed using Surfer 7 software to generate the contour plans and 3d terrain models use in the Figures 2–6.

2.4.2 Extensive survey

The site was initially walked in either a northerly or southerly direction along transects, which had been laid out at ten metre intervals. Each individual collected artefacts from a two metre wide strip along the length of their designated transect. Recovered artefacts were bagged and left at the exact spot where they were found. In most cases artefacts were placed in individual bags, although where more than one find was made within an area of one square metre, all were placed in the same bag. Following this, the bags were collected, numbered, and their co-ordinates recorded by GPS.

2.4.3 Intensive survey

The Brief stated the possible need for a more detailed fieldwalking survey should the initial 10m study not successfully characterise any potential sites. It was therefore decided, following the completion of the extensive survey, that two areas would be targeted in more detail.

The results from the 10m survey indicated that there were no definite concentrations of artefacts to be seen in any part of the study area and that any

spreads were of a dispersed nature. Given these results, it was decided that the best strategy would be to concentrate on two areas of potential importance and to subject each of these areas to a more detailed 5m survey. The locations of the detailed survey areas can be seen in Figures 3 to 6.

The first area covered approximately 6ha and was situated in proximity to Oakley Grange, where a spread of medieval pottery had been identified. The second 5m survey was focused on a scatter of flint-working debris located towards the middle of the site and covered 5.5ha.

Fieldwalking was carried out as in the extensive survey, but at a spacing of only 5m.Walking east to west, as opposed to the 10m survey, where transects were walked on a north to south alignment, ensured that almost the entire area of each hectare square was surveyed. Exact find spots were plotted using the GPS.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Artefacts Assemblage

All of the recovered artefacts were cleaned, weighed and quantified by type and date. The resulting information was entered into an Access database and used to generate a series of distribution plots

The following sections describe the combined assemblages from the 10m and 5m surveys.

3.1.1 Flint (*see* Figures 3 and 6)

A total of 183 pieces of flint were collected. Of these 127 were found to be unworked; 25 were burnt, whilst 96 pieces displayed characteristics of machine and frost damage. Patination was common on the latter assemblage. In addition, sixty-two pieces, weighing a total of 637.1g, were worked. The majority retained portions of cortex, exhibited a degree of patination and had suffered from post-depositional abrasion – for example, edge 'nicking' and plough and frost damage. The high degree of cream/white coloured patination present on both worked and unworked flint was probably the result of calcareous burial conditions rather than having any direct correlation to chronology.

The majority of the worked flint (46 pieces or 75% of worked assemblage) consisted of debitage, waste flake by-products from flint knapping. On the basis of the observed cortex, most of the raw material appears to be small nodules or pebbles derived from gravel deposits. Remains of six possible core fragments were also identified. Two exhibited remains of abraded platforms and a few blade/bladelet removal scars perhaps indicative of Mesolithic/Early Neolithic date. Four fragments retain a few flake scars suggestive of nodule testing.

Of the ten items identified as tools, the scrapers (five in number) and the utilised flakes (two in number) are not closely datable. One flake, which appears to have been machine damaged, exhibits polish on one patinated surface suggesting it may have originated from a Neolithic polished flint axe. A single arrowhead of barbed and tanged form dating from the Bronze Age was recovered. The incomplete survival of the last piece designated as a tool precludes certainty as to its identification. The tool is roughly rectangular in shape, one complete edge and remains of two others exhibiting retouch. The retouch on two opposing edges has been worked from the obverse face, whilst the adjoining edge has been retouched from the reverse. It is possible that this is the remains of a post-medieval gun flint.

3.1.2 Pottery (*see* Figures 4, 5 and 6, and Table 3)

The pottery dates range from the Saxon to the post-medieval periods, with the majority post-medieval in date. A single Saxon sherd was recovered, significant in that it is unabraded, something rarely found in fieldwalking assemblages. The medieval pottery is primarily of late medieval date, mid-15th

to 16th century, with oxidised wares, in bowl forms, predominating. A small quantity of earlier medieval pottery was found, among which were Potterspury, Lyveden and medieval shelly wares. The distinction between the Lyveden and the shelly wares is based primarily on the shape of the voids left by the dissolved inclusions. Sherds with round voids presumably from limestone, have been defined as Lyveden ware; sherds with elongated voids from shell inclusions have been defined as medieval shelly ware. Post-medieval types are mainly 17th and 18th century in date, with only a small quantity of modern pottery found.

3.1.3 Ceramic Building Material (*see* Figure 5)

Ceramic building material, with one exception, is of post-medieval date. The exception is a sherd of glazed flat roof tile, which might be of Potterspury type, dating to the late 13th century at the earliest, but more likely to be 14th or 15th century in date.

3.1.4 Other artefacts (*see* Figure5 and Table 2)

A limited assemblage of other material was also collected (*see* Table 2). Both the vessel glass assemblage and cast iron are of post-medieval to modern date. One whetstone is fashioned from Norwegian Ragstone originating from Eidsborge, Telemark, in central southern Norway. The importation of these whetstones began in the late Saxon or early post-Conquest periods. Coastal sites have a marked preponderance of this whetstone type in 12th and 13th century deposits, while inland towns saw the continued use of this material into the 14th and 15th centuries. The density and non-vesicular nature of much of the slag assemblage, along with the presence of tap slag, indicates this material derived from the smelting process.

4. INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Prehistoric

The presence of a number of worked flints suggests that some sort of human activity occurred on the site during prehistory. The majority of flint appears to be confined to the area of high ground situated towards the middle of the site in proximity to Lyveden Lodge, an abandoned farmhouse.

Due to the nature of much of the assemblage, which consists largely of waste flakes and the occasional crudely made tool, it is difficult to assign a more accurate date to the spread. Such evidence is also not necessarily indicative of settlement, although it is potentially interesting that a number of weak linear anomalies are noted in the *Geophysical Survey Report*[7] in close proximity to the flint scatter identified during fieldwalking.

Burnt flint is often seen to be a better signifier of human occupation, but although the majority of the ten examples found were confined to the northern half of the site no significant concentrations could be identified.

4.2 Saxon

A single sherd of Saxon pottery, discovered in the southern area of the site, is significant in that it is the only evidence from this period. It is possible that Saxon occupation occurred in this area and that the lack of supporting evidence may be due in part to alluvial cover of any sites in proximity to Harpers Brook. Such cover would also be likely to mask any features otherwise identifiable through geophysical survey.

4.3 Medieval

Pottery provides the most convincing evidence for occupation of the site during the medieval period. The 5m survey was implemented in an area close to Oakley Grange and was based on initial observations of material collected in the course of the 10m survey. It is clear from the results, however, that the medieval pottery forms a wide spread across the eastern part of the site and is not identifiable in any place as a concentration. It is possible that the present Grange was built on, or close to, the site of medieval settlement and that the scatters of pottery noted are the result of ploughing in of domestic debris.

4.4 Post-medieval

Significant spreads of post-medieval building material and domestic debris were noted in the vicinity of Oakley Grange and Lyveden Lodge. Slag was observed across most of the study area. No definite concentrations were apparent, although the largest quantities seemed to lie to the north-east of Oakley Grange. A representative sample was retained for examination and this was identified as slag derived from the smelting process. No charcoal spreads or evidence for earlier ironworking were found.

[7] *op. cit.*, section 3.2.15

Appendix

Table 1: Description of SMR sites noted in Figure 2

SMR Number	Description
4023	Early Iron Age pits, ditch, and round huts
4024	Cremation burial and sherds of Romano-British amphora
1383	Ring ditch
5282	Oakley Grange (19th C. farm)
8241	Flint scatter in burnt area containing modern glass
8243	2 ironworking furnaces of Iron Age or Saxon date

Table 2: Other Artefacts

Bag nos	Material	Description
25, 55 165 236 289	Glass	Vessel glass (post-medieval)
309	Lead	Strip
208	Iron	Decorative cast iron (post-medieval)
143 312 322	Stone	Whetstones and ?paving slab
35 46 60 152 232 295	Slag	Ferrous smelting

Table 3: Pottery types

BagNo	Period	CTS Codes		Definition	Sherd	Weight (g)
		Nhants	Beds			
17	Med	330	B07	Medieval shelly ware	1	8
26	Pmed	–	Mod	Willow pattern	1	1
32	Pmed	426	P03	Black-glazed earthenware	1	15
33	Pmed	426	P03	Black-glazed earthenware	1	7
37	Pmed	426	P03	Black-glazed earthenware	1	1
38	Pmed			Staffs black glazed	1	3
41	Pmed			Staffs black glazed	1	10
44	Pmed	426	P03	Black-glazed earthenware	1	29
49	Pmed			Staffs black glazed	1	8
53	Pmed	421	P25	Stoneware (Frechen?)	1	14
54	Pmed			Staffs black glazed	1	11
61	Pmed	426	P03	Black-glazed earthenware	1	12
62	Med	401/ 378/ 325	E02	Late medieval oxidised	1	13
63	Pmed	426	P03	Black-glazed earthenware	1	5
64	Pmed	426	P03	Black-glazed earthenware	1	47
65	Pmed			Staffs black glazed	1	47
68	Pmed	404	P12	Cistercian	1	1
70	Pmed	426	P03	Black-glazed earthenware	1	11
71	Pmed			Staffs black glazed	1	8
74	Med	401/ 378/ 325	E02?	Late medieval oxidised	1	32
76	Pmed	426	P03	Black-glazed earthenware	1	3
77	Pmed			Staffs black glazed	1	5
78	Pmed			Staffs black glazed	1	6
81	Pmed	403	P28C	Midland purple	1	9
82	Pmed	417	P36A	Brown salt-glazed stoneware	1	16
85	Pmed	409	P30	Staffs slipped	1	5
89	Pmed	411	P14	Blackware	1	4
91	Pmed	403	P28C	Midland purple	1	11
95	Pmed	–	Mod	Plant pot	1	3
97	Pmed			Staffs black glazed	1	5
100	Pmed	–	Mod	Plant pot	1	3
103	Pmed			Staffs black glazed	1	1
105	Pmed			Staffs black glazed	1	15
111	Pmed	–	Mod	Plant pot	1	13
113	Pmed	426	P03	Black-glazed earthenware	1	8
117	Pmed			Staffs black glazed	1	7
120	Med	–	C	Medieval sandy	1	4
122	Undiag				1	14
124	Undiag				1	4
129	Med	401/ 378/ 325	E02	Late medieval oxidised	1	14
139	Saxon	–	A16	Coarse tempered (?sandstone-derived)	1	4
140	Pmed			Staffs black glazed	1	13
144	Pmed			Staffs black glazed	1	32

BagNo	Period	CTS Codes		Definition	Sherd	Weight (g)
		Nhants	Beds			
148	Med	401/ 378/ 325	E02	Late medieval oxidised	1	7
153	Med	401/ 378/ 325	E02	Late medieval oxidised	1	8
155	Med	365	E01	Late medieval reduced	1	7
157	PMed			Staffs black glazed	1	15
158	Med	401/ 378/ 325	E02	Late medieval oxidised	1	3
159	Med	401/ 378/ 325	E02	Late medieval oxidised	1	11
161	PMed	411	P14	Blackware	1	7
162	PMed	413	P19	Mottled glazed	1	2
163	PMed	–	Mod	Plant pot	1	7
164	PMed	413	P19	Mottled glazed	1	3
167	Med	329	C10	Potterspury	1	17
168	PMed	426	P03	Black-glazed earthenware	1	12
170	PMed	417	P36A	Brown salt-glazed stoneware	1	8
171	PMed	426	P03	Black-glazed earthenware	1	42
172	Med	401/ 378/ 325	E02	Late medieval oxidised	1	4
174	Med	401/ 378/ 325	E02	Late medieval oxidised	1	3
175	Med	–	E03	Late medieval oxidised	1	2
177	Med	–	C	Medieval sandy	1	7
182	Med	329	C10	Potterspury	1	17
183	PMed			Staffs black glazed	1	5
200	Med	319/ 320	B09	Lyveden	1	3
206	Med	403	P28C	Midland purple	1	11
207	PMed	417	P36A	Brown salt-glazed stoneware	1	6
209	PMed	–		Jackfield ware?	1	2
213	PMed	418	P43	Pearlware	1	4
214	Med	401/ 378/ 325	E02	Late medieval oxidised	1	13
215	PMed			Staffs black glazed	1	4
216	PMed	426	P03	Black-glazed earthenware	1	23
217	PMed	26	P03	Black-glazed earthenware	2	12
218	PMed			Staffs black glazed	1	88
220	Undiag	–			1	1
220	Med	401/ 378/ 325	E02	Late medieval oxidised	2	12
222	Med	319/ 320	B09	Lyveden	1	3
224	Undiag	–			1	4

225	Med	365	E01	Late medieval reduced	1	14
226	Med	–	E03	Late medieval oxidised (smooth)	1	13
228	PMed	–	Mod	Willow pattern	1	2
231	PMed	413	P19	Mottled glazed	1	1
BagNo	Period	CTS Codes		Definition	Sherd	Weight (g)
		Nhants	Beds			
234	PMed			Staffs black glazed	1	4
238	Med	330	B07	Medieval shelly	1	4
246	Med	401/ 378/ 325	E02	Late medieval oxidised	1	4
248	Med	401/ 378/ 325	E02	Late medieval oxidised	1	21
249	Med	329	C10	Potterspury	1	7
250	Med	403	P28C	Midland purple	1	64
252	Med	319/ 320	B09	Lyveden	1	23
253	Med	319/ 320	B09	Lyveden	1	2
254	Med	319/ 320	B09	Lyveden	1	2
255	Med	329	C10?	Potterspury	1	1
256	Med	401/ 378/ 325	E02	Late medieval oxidised	1	24
262	Undiag	–			1	1
263	Med	365	E01	Late medieval reduced	1	2
264	Undiag	–			1	6
269	Med	365	E01	Late medieval reduced		
270	Med	–	C	Medieval sandy	1	4
275	PMed	426	P03	Black-glazed earthenware	1	1
288	PMed			Staffs black glazed	1	3
297	Med	330	B07	Medieval shelly	1	9
311	PMed	418	P43	Pearlware	1	78
329	Undiag	–			1	22
335	PMed	421	P25	Stoneware (Frechen?)	1	3
341	PMed			Staffs black glazed	1	30

Fig. 1: Site location map showing outline of Study Area.

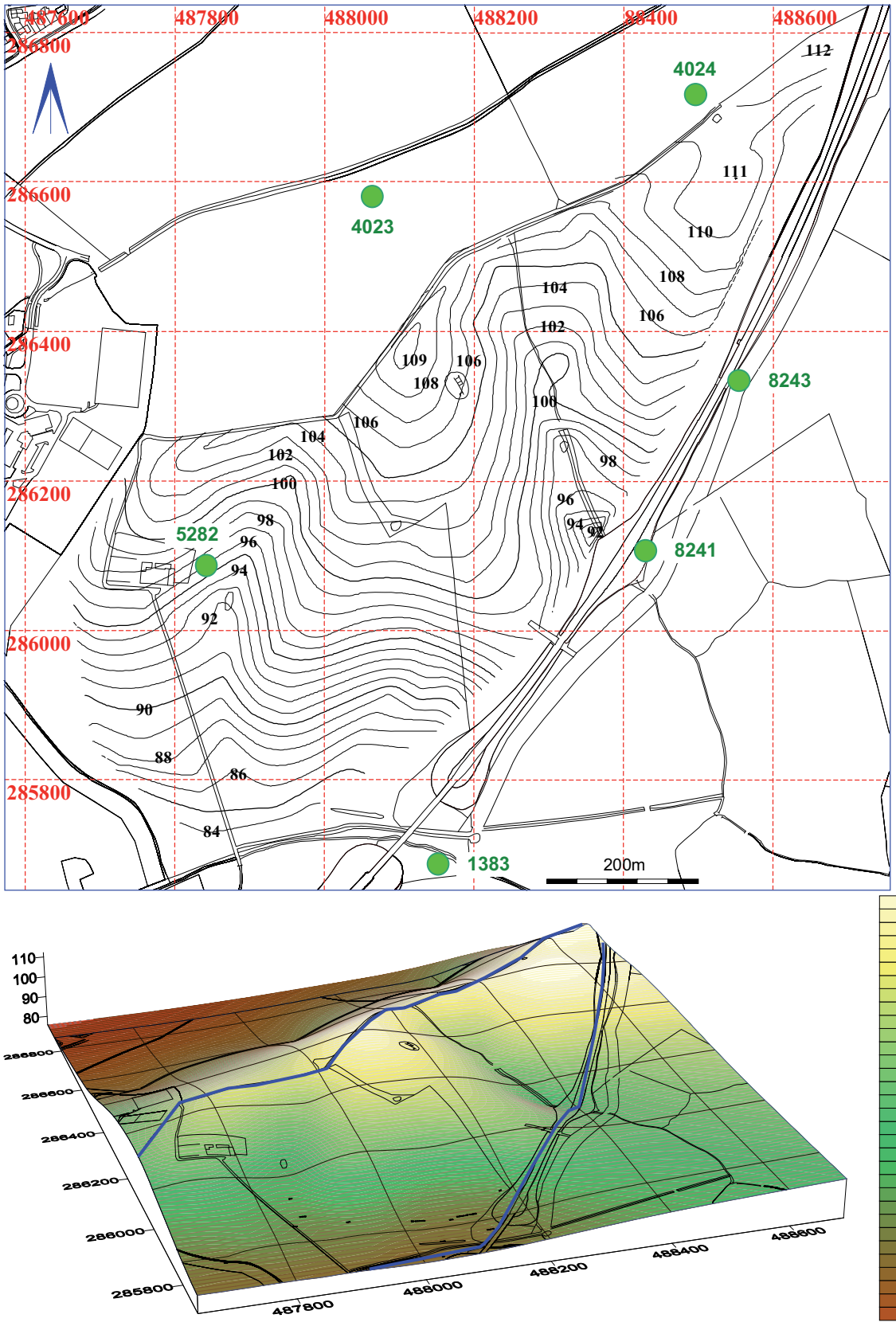

Fig. 2: Contour plot of Study Area (heights in metres) showing known SMR sites, and 3d map (vertical scale = 4x horizontal scale).

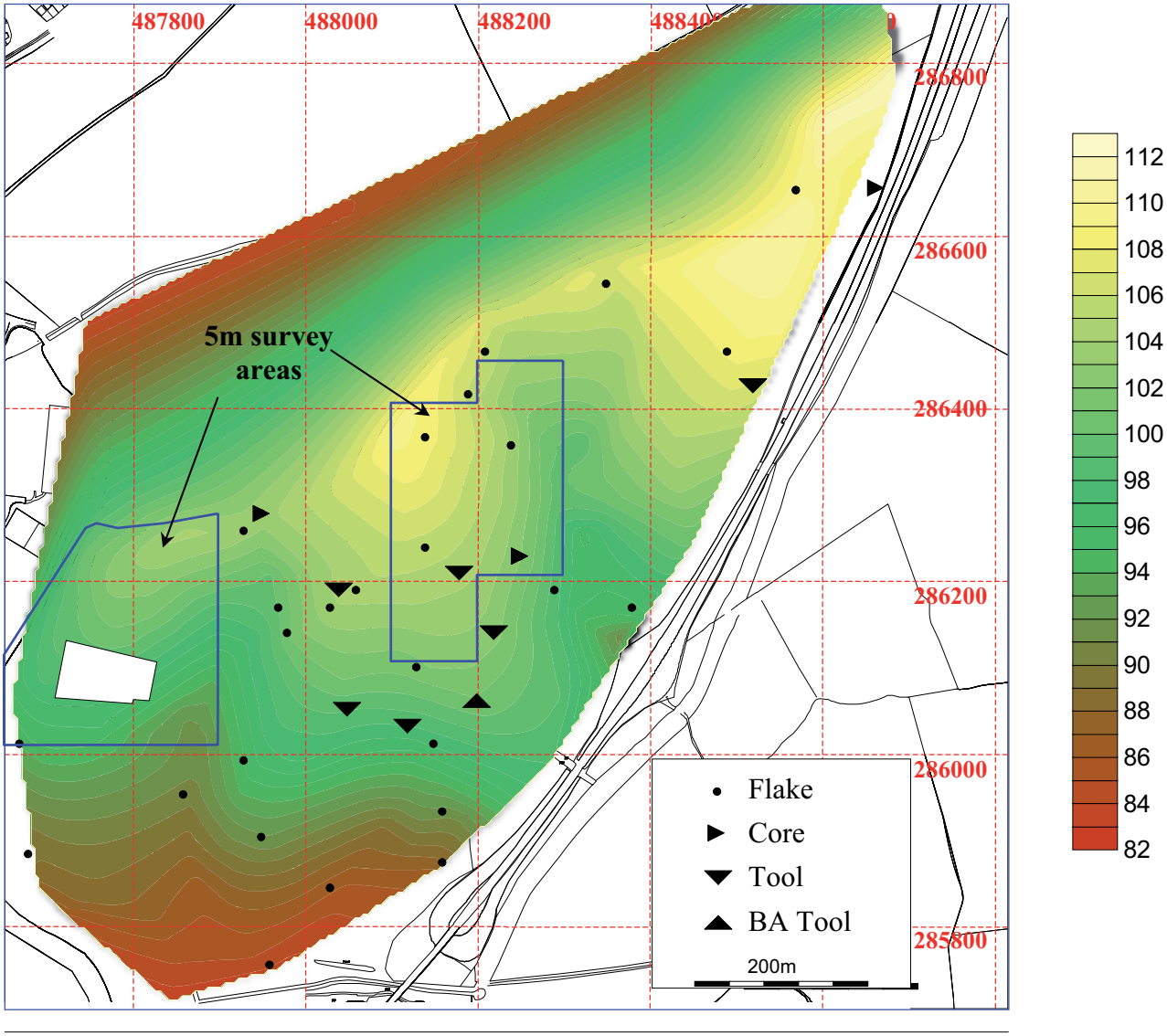

Fig. 3: Distribution of flint from 10m survey, superimposed on coloured relief map.

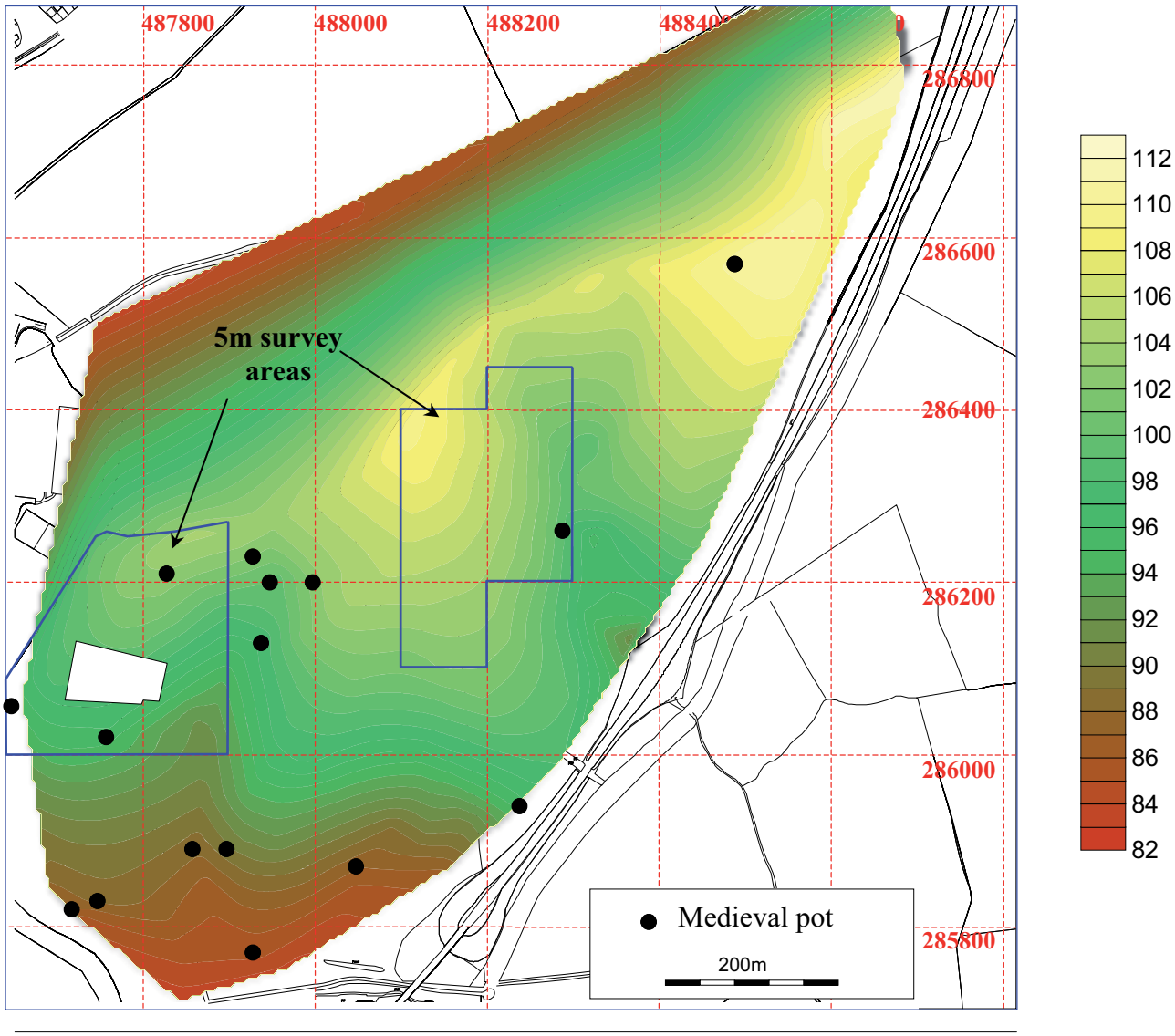

Fig. 4: Distribution of medieval pot from 10m survey.

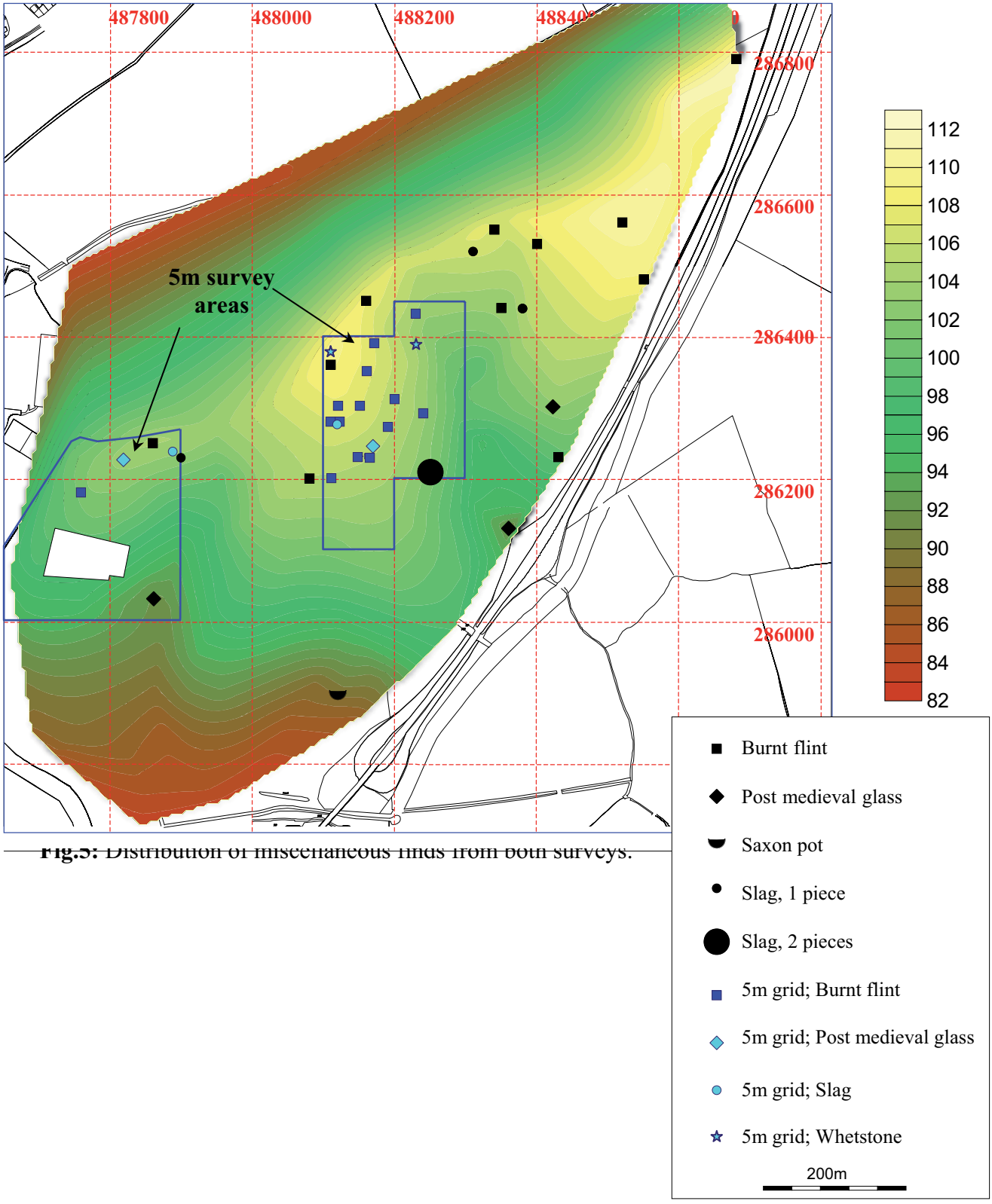

Fig.3: Distribution of miscellaneous finds from both surveys.

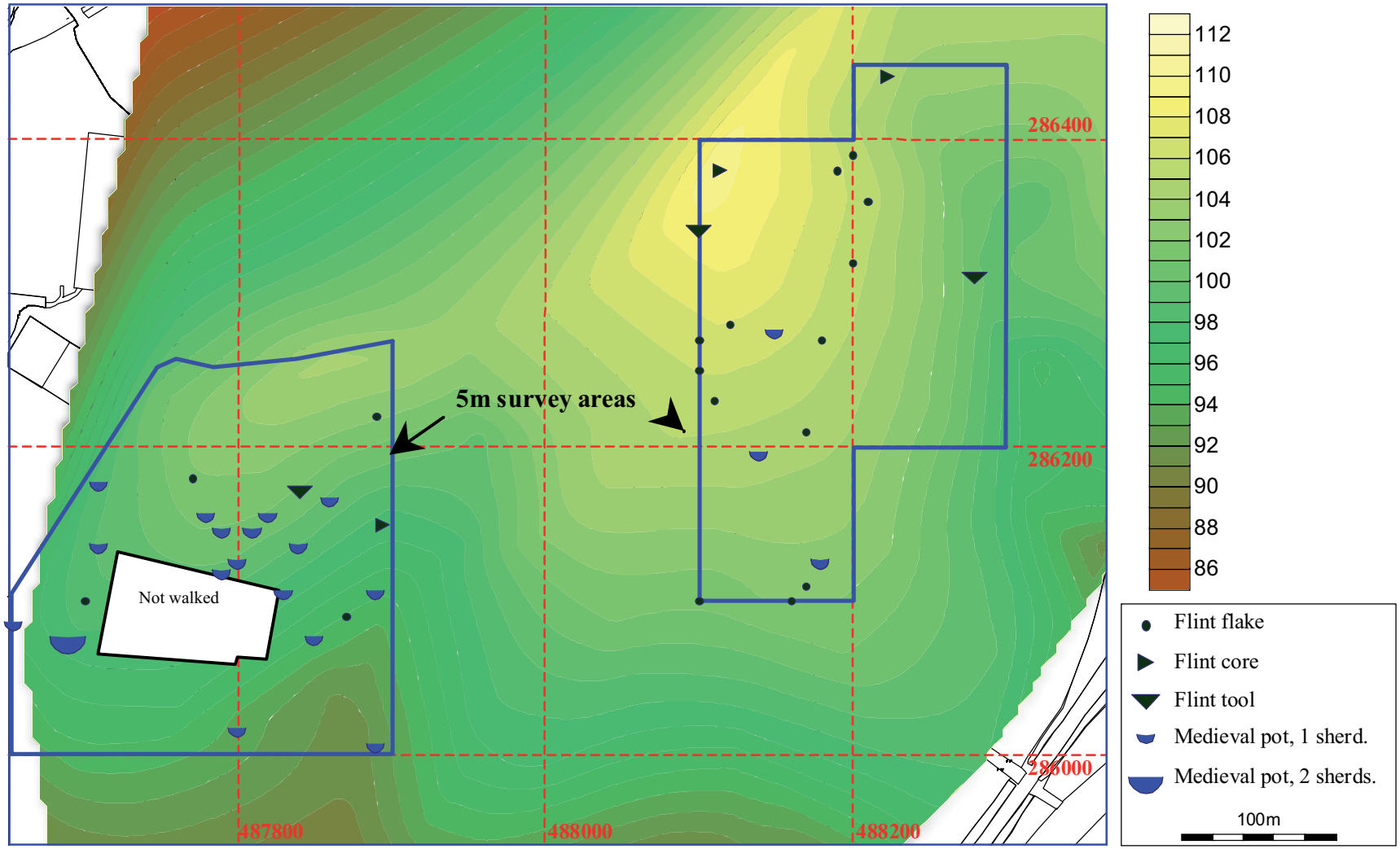

Fig. 6: Distribution of flint and medieval pottery from 5m survey.