



NEW FENCING, HENGISTBURY HEAD, DORSET
Archaeological Observations and Recording



Report No. 53207/3/1

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Archaeological Observations and Recording,
December 2005

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New Fencing, Hengistbury Head, Dorset Archaeological Observations & Recording, December 2005

SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Terrain Archaeology in December 2005 during the erection of new fencing in three areas on Hengistbury Head, Dorset. No in situ archaeological deposits or features were recognised during the work. A small quantity of worked flint and Middle – Late Iron Age/Roman pottery was recovered from Long Field and Barn Field. The worked flint was probably mainly Late Neolithic in date and was largely concentrated at the southern end of Barn Field. This is close to a flint concentration recognised by Bushe-Fox during his excavations of 1911–12 and may be part of a Late Neolithic activity area in this part of Hengistbury Head.

INTRODUCTION

Terrain Archaeology was commissioned by Bournemouth Borough Council to undertake a programme of archaeological observations and recording during the erection of new fencing on Hengistbury Head, Dorset.

The proposed development comprised the erection of new fencing in Barn Field, Long Field, and Saltmarsh (Figure 2). The fencing in Long Field and Saltmarsh had driven posts and consequently required no archaeological observation however the fencepost holes for associated gates were excavated by hand and the resulting spoil investigated. The fencepost holes in Barn Field were excavated by hydraulic auger and the resulting spoil investigated.

Archaeological Observations and Recording, also known as an archaeological watching brief, is defined by the Institute of Field Archaeologists as “a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons, within a specified area or site where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed.”

Hengistbury Head lies on the eastern edge of Bournemouth and forms the southern side of Christchurch Harbour, centred on Ordnance Survey NGR SZ17309081 (Figure 1). It comprises a long narrow headland, rising up to about 36 m above OD on Warren Hill on the southern side.

The underlying geology is complex and comprises Tertiary sands and gravels of the Bracklesham series and the upper part of the headland on Warren Hill is capped with Pleistocene gravels.

The site lies within Hengistbury Head Scheduled Monument Dorset 824 (Figure 1).

The fieldwork was carried out between 12th–14th December 2005 by Steven Tatler.

Terrain Archaeology would like to acknowledge the help and cooperation of the following during this project: Mark Holloway, the fencing contractors, Lorraine Mepham, and Rebecca Montague.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Hengistbury Head is rich in archaeological remains and has been the focus of several major archaeological excavations, including those of J. P. Bushe-Fox (1911-12) in Barn Field and Long

Field; Barry Cunliffe (1979-1984) in Long Field and across the lower parts of the headland; and Nick Barton (1980-84) on the upper part of the headland (Bushe-Fox 1915, Cunliffe 1987, Barton 1992).

Large quantities of surface finds of worked flint dating from the Upper Palaeolithic to the Bronze Age have been recovered from Hengistbury Head over many years. Through the work of Mace (1959), Campbell (1977) and Barton (1992), an important Upper Palaeolithic open air site and an Early Mesolithic hunter's camp have been investigated on Warren Hill on the upper part of the headland. Finds of Mesolithic flint have been found not only on the upper part of the headland, but also along the harbour foreshore, in the Nursery Garden, and outside the Double Dykes to the west, indicating a widespread use of the headland in the Mesolithic (Barton 1992).

Large quantities of Late Neolithic flint has been found across Hengistbury Head, but mainly concentrated on Warren Hill and in the Nursery Garden, with smaller concentrations on the eastern side and to the north of Barn Field (Gardiner 1987). An Early Bronze Age barrow cemetery comprising at least 13 barrows is present on the headland (Cunliffe 1987).

There is evidence for intensive settlement and activity on Hengistbury from the Late Bronze Age to the Roman period. During the Late Iron Age, Hengistbury developed into a major port. Occupation of the headland continued into the later Roman period (Cunliffe 1987).

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The objective of the archaeological observations was to establish and make available information about the archaeological resource existing on the site.

The archaeological works aimed to observe and record all the *in situ* archaeological deposits and features revealed during the groundworks to an appropriate professional standard.

METHODS

The work was undertaken in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation produced by Terrain Archaeology (Document No. 3207/0/1), and the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Code of Conduct and Standard and guidance for archaeological watching briefs* (1994, as revised).

The fencepost holes for the two gates in Saltmarsh had already been excavated and the posts erected before the archaeological observations began. The spoil from the eastern gate had been removed but that from the western gate remained and was investigated (Figure 3).

In Long Field the fencepost holes for the northern gate and one for the southern gate had also been excavated and the posts erected before observations began (Plate 1). The spoil from these fencepost holes was still present and was investigated (Figure 4).

The fencepost holes in Barn Field were excavated by a hydraulic auger in one operation prior to the erection of the fence (Plates 2–3). The fencepost holes had a diameter of 0.3 m and were excavated to a depth of up to 0.7 m. The posts were set every 1.8 m and the spoil from the holes was investigated.

All features and deposits, exposed during the works, were recorded using components of the Terrain Archaeology recording system of complementary written, drawn and photographic records. Each fencepost hole was given a unique number, with each context numbered as a suffix to the fencepost hole number (e.g. 001.1, 001.2, etc).

The records, and any materials recovered, have been compiled in a stable, cross-referenced and fully indexed archive in accordance with current UKIC guidelines and the requirements of the receiving museum.

RESULTS

Saltmarsh

The fencepost holes (1 and 2) at the western gate of Saltmarsh (Figure 3) were excavated through a mid greyish-brown silty sand topsoil containing frequent flint gravel (up to 50 mm across). Underlying this was a very pale brown coarse sand natural containing abundant flint gravel (up to 70 mm across). No finds were recovered.

Long Field

The fencepost holes (3 and 4) at the northern end of the field (Figure 4) were excavated through a dark greyish-brown silty sand topsoil containing moderate flint gravel (up to 70 mm across). No natural deposits were observed. At the southern end of the field, fencepost hole 5 was excavated through a yellowish-brown sandy loam topsoil, up to 50 mm thick, which overlay a pale yellowish-brown silty sand natural. The only finds recovered were from the western fencepost hole of the northern gate (4) and comprised five sherds of Late Iron Age pottery and two flint flakes.

Barn Field

A total of 182 fencepost holes were excavated along the southern and eastern edges of Barn Field (Figure 5). In the southern half of the field, the holes cut through a reddish-brown silty sand topsoil, up to 0.7 m deep, containing rare flint gravel. In this area, no natural strata were observed. In the northern half of the field, in the northern 100 m of the fenceline, the underlying natural was encountered at a depth of 0.5 m. This consisted of loose flint gravel containing patches of coarse sand.

Finds were recovered from a total of fifty-two fencepost holes and included Iron Age/Roman pottery and worked flint. A list of finds by context can be found at the end of this report and the distribution of the pottery and flint is shown on Figures 6–7.

Finds

The finds recovered from the individual fencepost holes are listed in at then end of this report and are summarised by field in Table 1. Almost all of the finds were found in Barn Field and the distribution of Pottery and flint is shown on Figures 6–7. No finds were recovered from Saltmarsh.

Field	Iron Age/ Roman pot		Post- medieval pot		C.B.M.		Worked Flint		Burnt Flint		Glass		Slate		Slag	
	No.	Wt(g)	No.	Wt(g)	No.	Wt(g)	No.	Wt(g)	No.	Wt(g)	No.	Wt(g)	No.	Wt(g)	No.	Wt(g)
Long Field	5	22					2	8								
Barn Field	13	135	2	42	2	41	37	159	13	277	1	7	1	2	1	14
<i>Total</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>157</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>41</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>167</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>277</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>14</i>

Table 1: Finds assemblage by Field.

Pottery by Lorraine Mephram (Wessex Archaeology)

Twenty sherds of pottery were recovered from Long Field and Barn Field (Table 1). All except two post-medieval/ modern sherds were of Iron Age/Roman date (Table 2). All the Iron Age/Roman sherds would seem to fit within the known range of fabrics for Hengistbury Head – most are sandy, with the rounded quartz grains typical of the Poole Harbour industries of the MIA onwards. The other sherds are also likely to be relatively locally made, apart from the couple of rock-tempered sherds (9.1, 80.1), at least one of which (9.1) is definitely of igneous origin. These could

be continental imports, or could be from the southwest (Glastonbury type wares). There is only one diagnostic sherd – a small upright rim (140.1), although the overall vessel form is uncertain.

Context	No. sherds	Wt. (g)	Description	Date
4.1	4	19	BB1	LIA/RB
4.1	1	3	coarse sandy (Durotrigian BB?), well burnished	LIA
6.1	1	3	sandy, abraded	M/LIA
9.1	1	11	igneous, burnished	M/LIA
22.1	1	1	sandy, rare flint, abraded	M/LIA
55.1	1	31	Verwood earthenware	post-med
80.1	2	15	hard sandy, 1 burnished	M/LIA
80.1	1	7	hard, rock (?igneous) inclusions, burnished	M/LIA
101.1	1	2	grog-tempered	LIA
101.1	1	4	BB1	LIA/RB
107.1	1	41	coarse sandy (Durotrigian BB?)	LIA
109.1	1	4	fine matrix, rare flint	MIA
140.1	1	5	sandy, upright rim	M/LIA
163.1	1	38	grog-tempered	LIA/RB
170.1	1	4	sandy, burnished dec	LIA/RB
178.1	1	11	stoneware	modern

Table 2: Pottery Assemblage by context

Ceramic Building Material

One piece of brick and one roof tile fragment were recovered from Barn Field. These are undated but are probably post-medieval.

Flint

A total of 39 pieces of worked flint was recovered from the fencepost holes. The raw material was gravel flint. The assemblage was generally in a fresh condition, with only a few pieces bearing edge damage. A small quantity were very rolled and glossed, and/or patinated. One burnt flake was also present.

Thirty-one flakes were recovered (79.5% of the total assemblage) and two blades (5.1%). No cores were recovered. The majority of pieces came from a flake industry, but no diagnostic pieces were present, though the majority of this material would fit comfortably within a Late Neolithic flint industry. Most of the flakes were squat secondary trimming flakes. The two blades do not appear to be deliberate products of a blade industry, but should be more properly seen as long trimming flakes. A single squat broad flake with a wide platform and frequent miss-hits (from fencepost hole 26) may date to the Middle-Late Bronze Age. A patinated long blade-like flake from Long Field (fencepost hole 4) may be earlier prehistoric (possibly Mesolithic) in date.

227 g of burnt unworked flint was recovered. Its distribution was restricted to the southern end of Barn Field.

Other Finds

A single piece of modern glass, one fragment of slate and a piece of slag were recovered from three separate post holes in the southern half of Barn Field.

DISCUSSION

The small scale and character of the groundworks means the scope for undertaking more than a simple description of the findings is extremely limited. None of the fencepost holes produced recognisable evidence for any *in situ* archaeological features and deposits. In Saltmarsh and in Long Field, the fencepost holes were dug through a topsoil layer into the underlying natural

deposits. In Barn Field, natural deposits were only encountered in the northern part of the field. The overlying topsoil was about 0.5 m thick in this area. To the south, the deposits overlying the natural were over 0.7 m thick. Without further investigation, the significance of this cannot be determined with any degree of confidence.

The finds recovered from the observations fit well within the range of finds previously recovered from Hengistbury Head. The worked flint contained no diagnostic pieces, but can be suggested, on the basis of previous work on the distribution of flint at Hengistbury Head, that it is most likely to date to the Late Neolithic period (Gardiner 1987). The flint (including the unworked burnt flint) was largely concentrated near the southern end of Barn Field and is about 50 m to the east of Bushe-Fox's Site 3, where he recognised a concentration of flint and which has been suggested as a possible Late Neolithic activity area (Gardiner 1987, 25).

There is little that can be deduced from the distribution of the Iron Age/Roman pottery, which provides no new information on the Iron Age/Roman activity at Hengistbury Head.

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LIST OF FINDS BY CONTEXT

Context	IA/ RB pot		Post-med pot		C.B.M.		Worked Flint		Burnt Flint		Glass		Slate		Slag	
	No.	Wt(g)	No.	Wt(g)	No.	Wt(g)	No.	Wt(g)	No.	Wt(g)	No.	Wt(g)	No.	Wt(g)	No.	Wt(g)
Long Field																
4.1	5	22					2	8								
Barn Field																
6.1	1	3														
9.1	1	11														
10.1							1									
13.1							1	1	1	19	1	7				
15.1									1	45						
17.1									1	68						
18.1									2	14						
20.1							5	19					1	2		
21.1							2	11	1	1						
22.1	1	1					4	16								
23.1							1	1	1	1						
26.1							1	9								
29.1							1	3								
30.1							1	1								
33.1							1	9								
36.1									1	4						
43.1									1	15						
44.1									1	35						
49.1							1	1								
51.1									1	18						
55.1			1	31												
57.1							1	3								
60.1									1	50						
65.1							1	1								
70.1					1	27										
78.1							1	21								
80.1	3	22														
85.1							1	1								
86.1							1	2								
90.1							1	8								
97.1															1	14
99.1							2	9								
101.1	2	6														
104.1							1	6								
107.1	1	41														
108.1							1	8								
109.1	1	4														
111.1					1	14										
115.1							1	15								
119.1									1	7						
131.1							1	4								
134.1							1	1								
137.1							1	1								
140.1	1	5														
163.1	1	38					1	1								
168.1							1	1								
170.1	1	4														
172.1							1	1								
175.1																
178.1			1	11												
180.1							1	2								
182.1							1	3								
Total	18	157	2	42	2	41	39	167	13	277	1	7	1	2	1	14

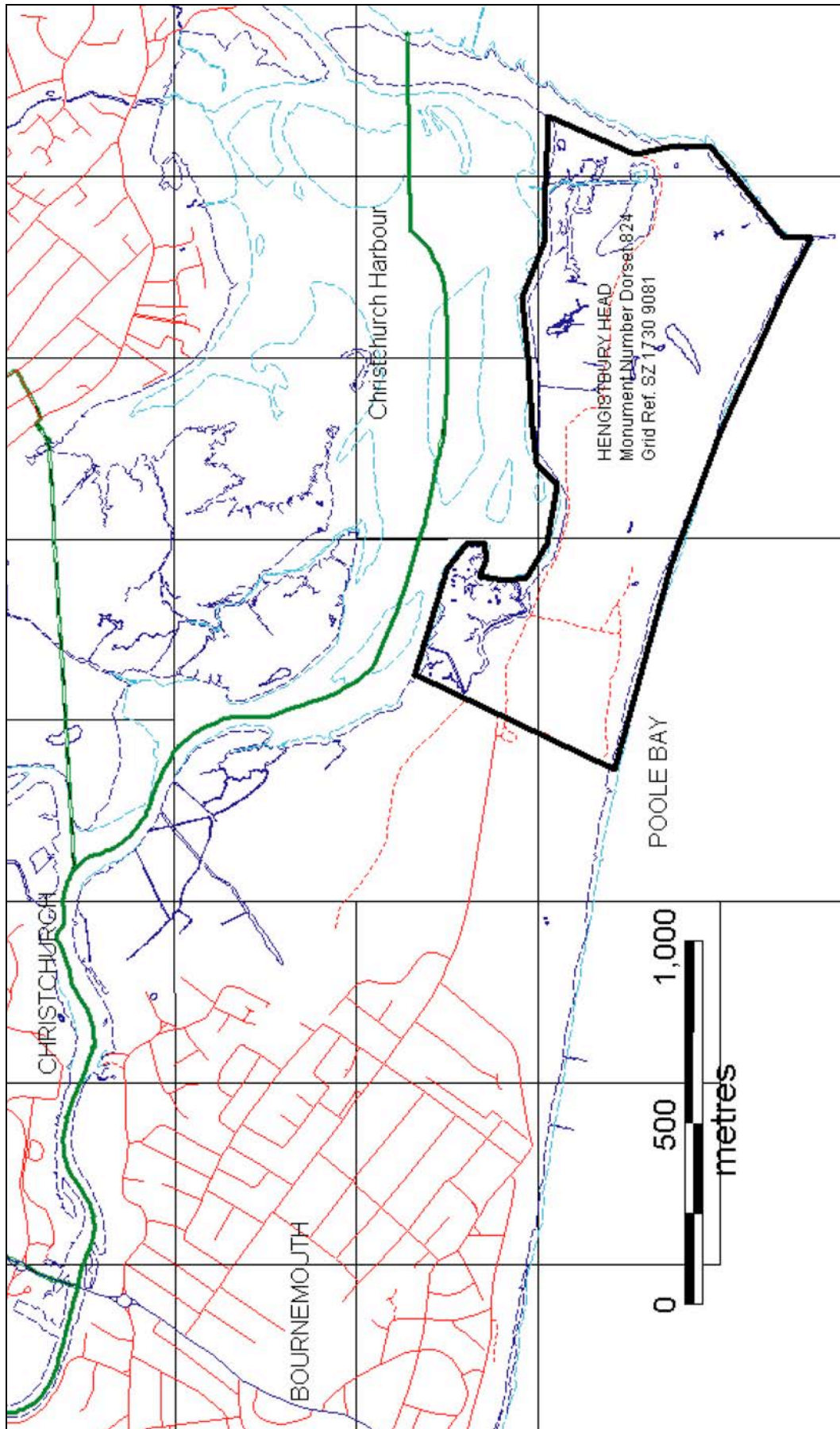


Figure 1: Site Location map (from a plan provided by the client).

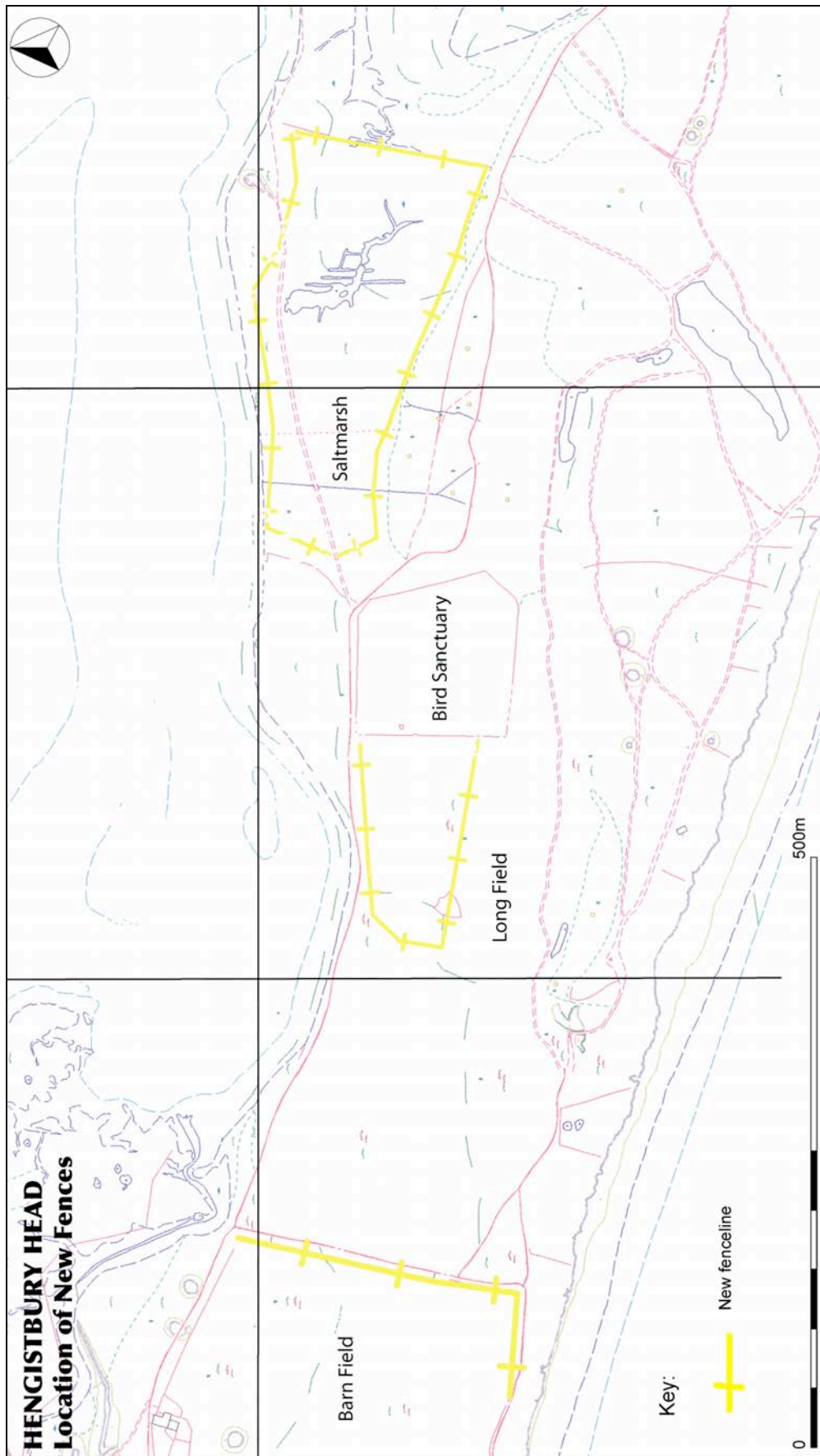


Figure 2: Location of the new fences in Saltmarsh, Long Field and Barn Field (from a plan provided by the client).

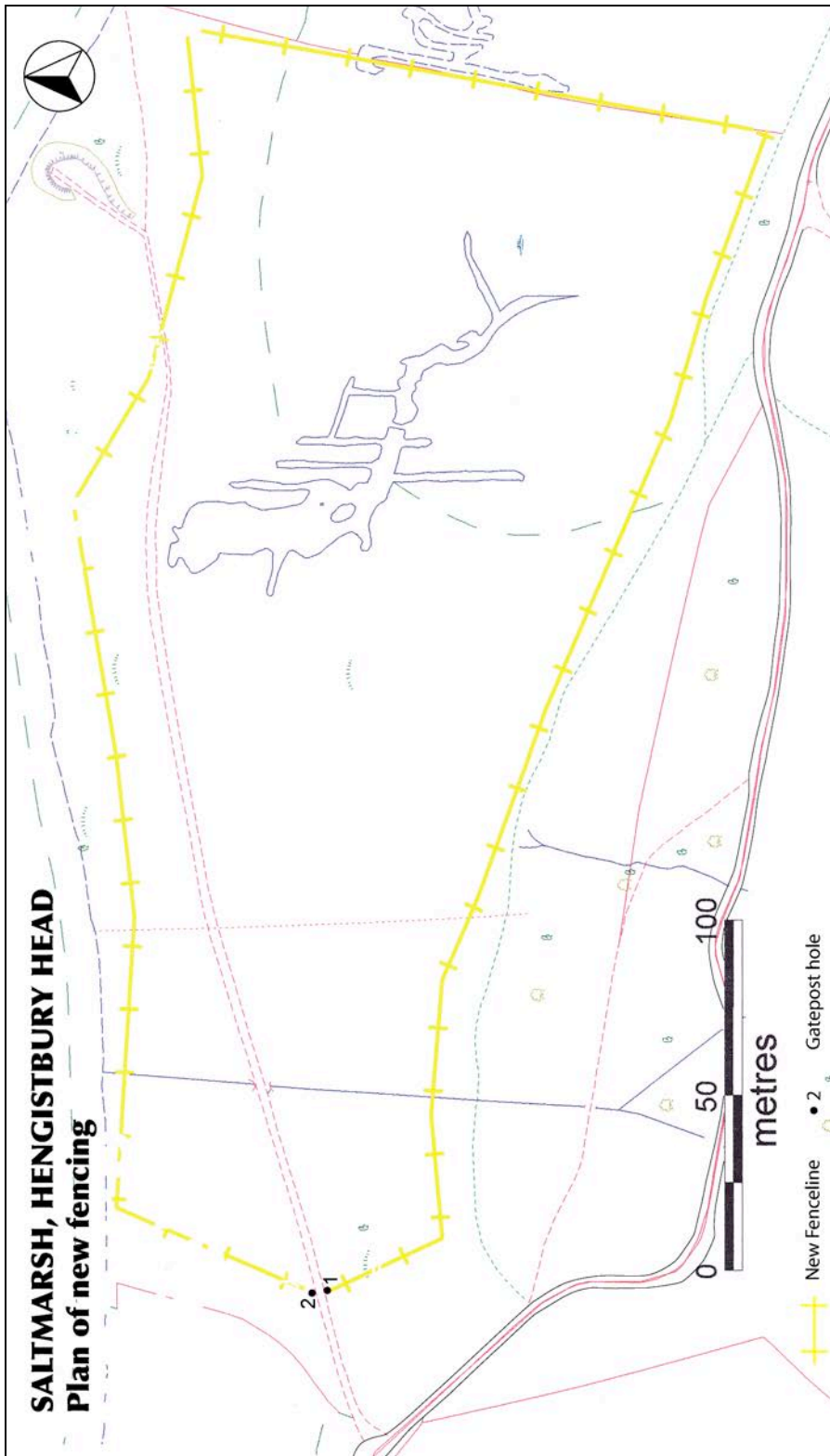


Figure 3: Plan of observed fencepost holes in Saltmarsh (from a plan provided by the client).

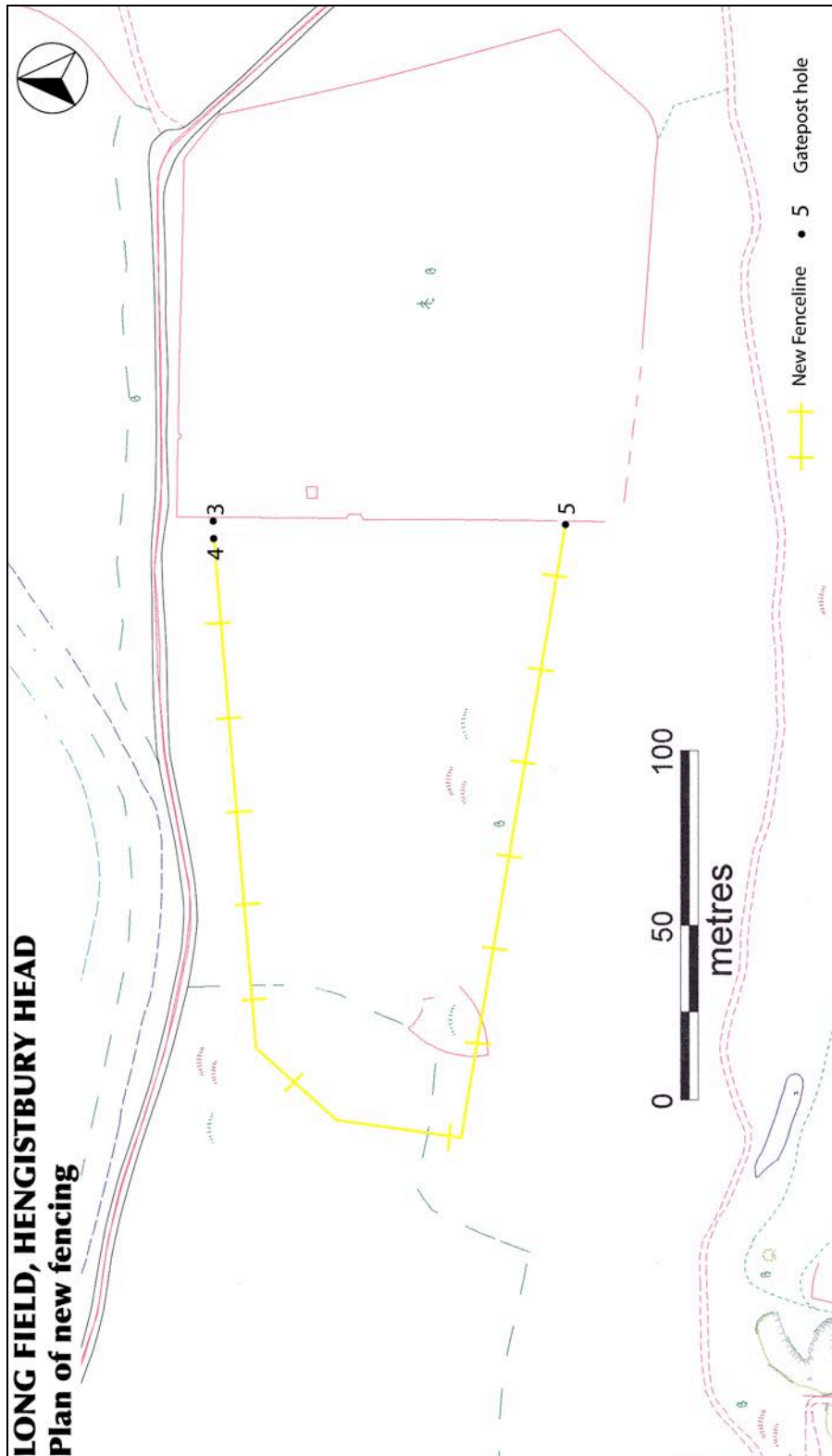


Figure 4: Plan of observed fencepost holes in Long Field (from a plan provided by the client).

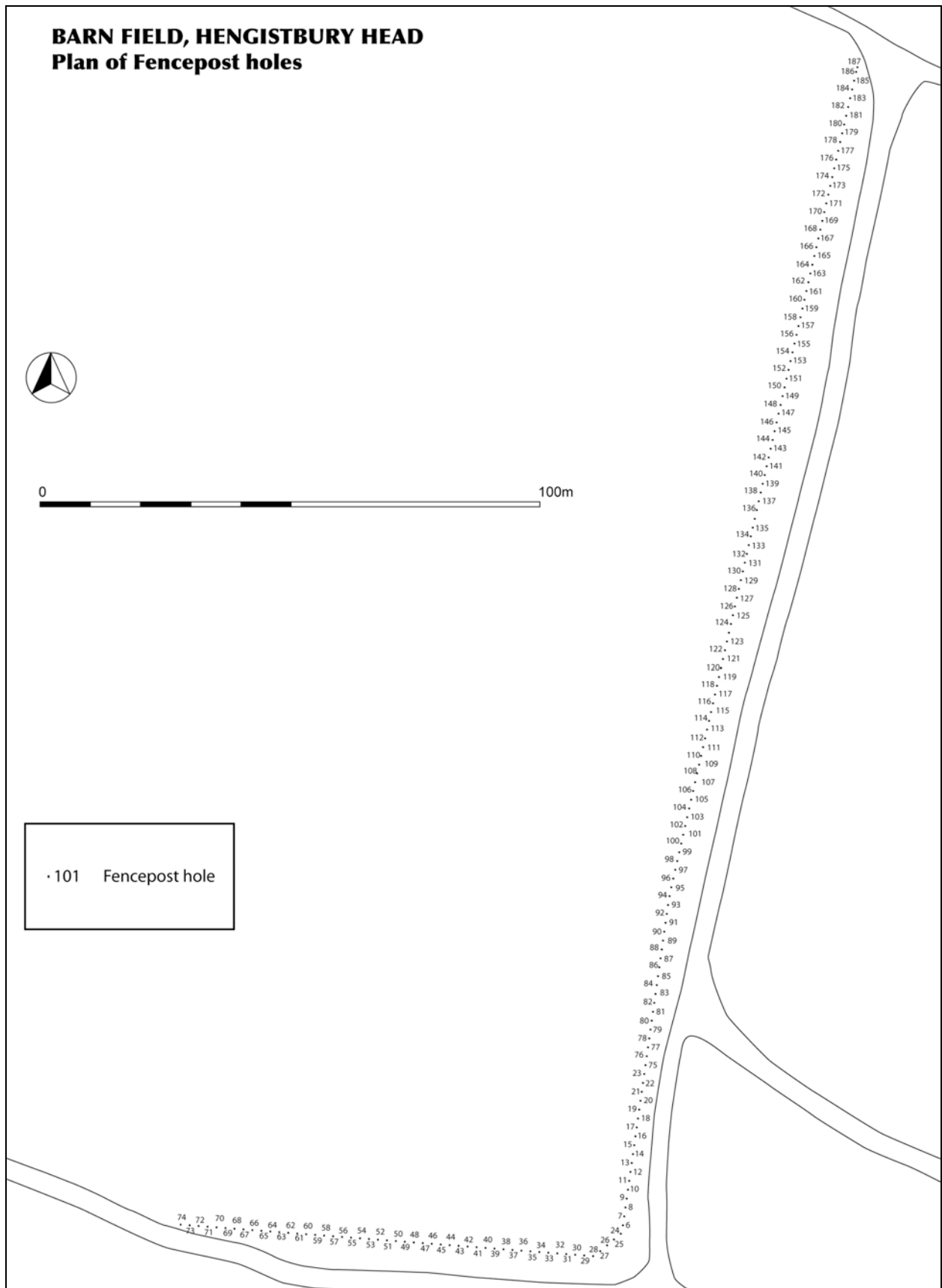


Figure 5: Plan of observed fencepost holes in Barn Field.

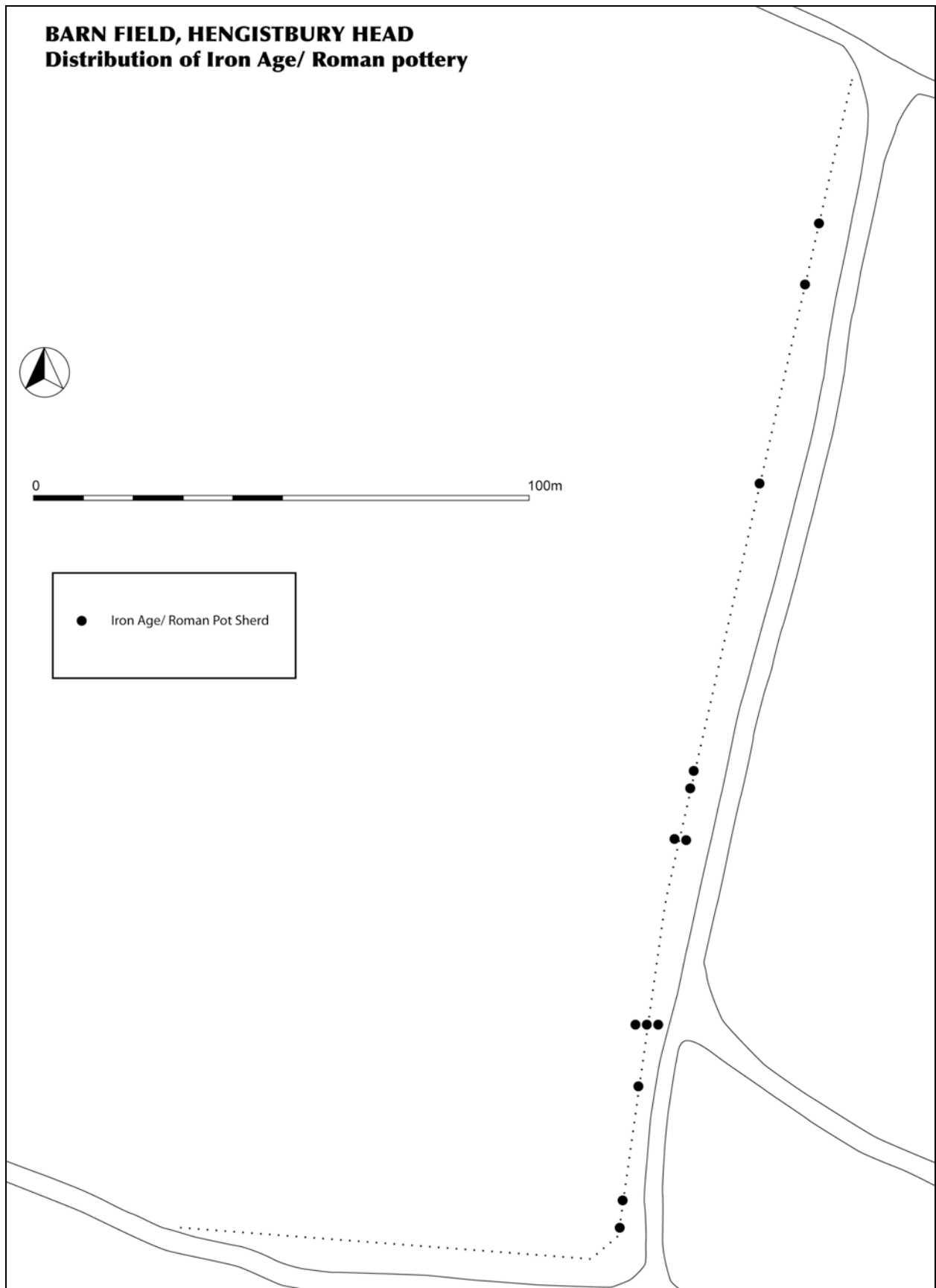


Figure 6: Distribution of Iron Age/ Roman pottery in Barn Field.

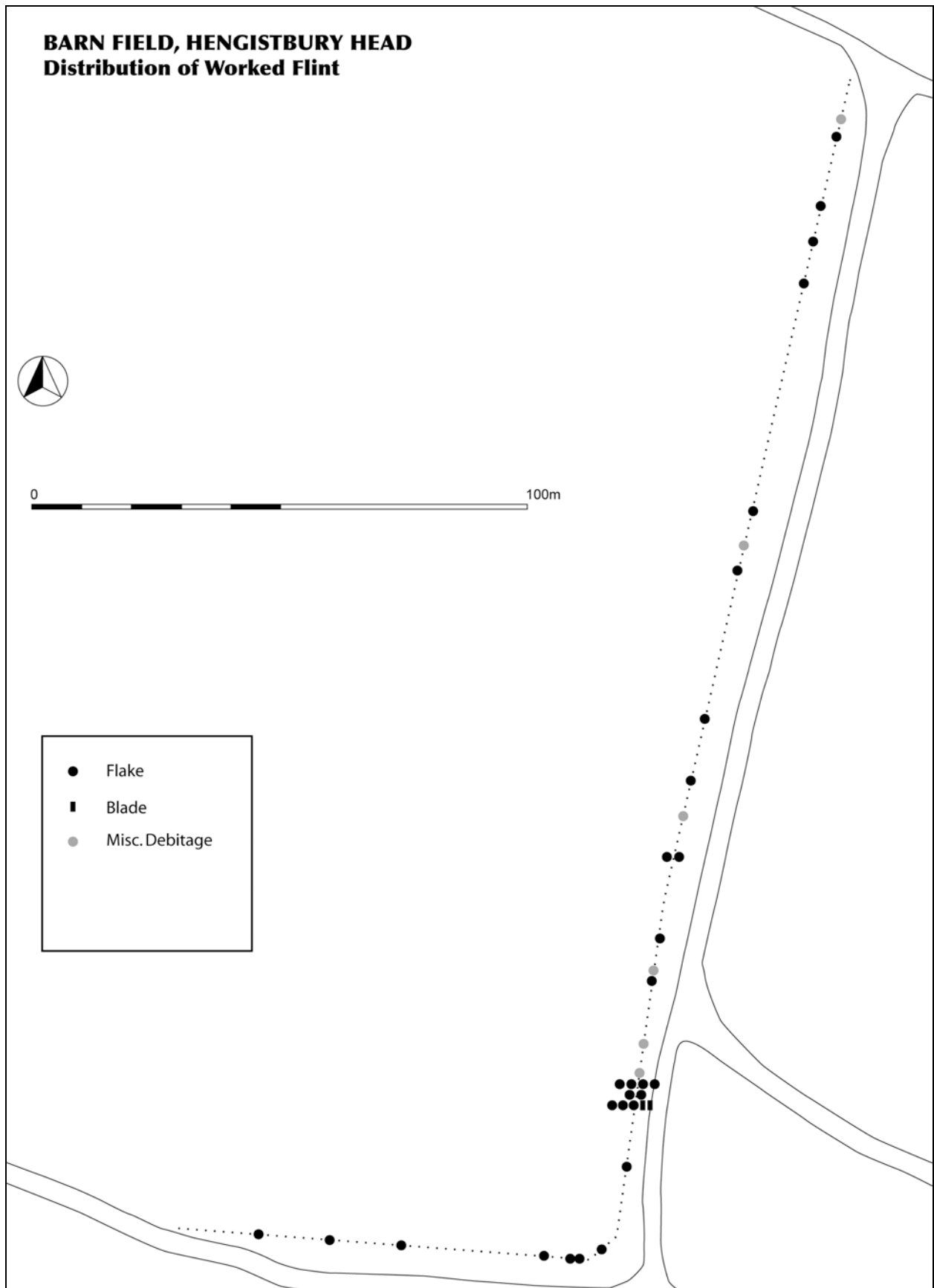


Figure 7: Distribution of worked flint in Barn Field.



Plate 1: North gate of new fence in Long Field, looking south.



Plate 2: General view of area of new fence line in Barn Field, looking NNW.



Plate 3: View along fencepost holes in Barn Field, looking north.