

# **FORGE AND MONUMENT, CODNOR, DERBYSHIRE**

**An archaeological watching brief 2002-2003**

**Prepared by M. Hurford**

**2013**

**Project Code – FMC**

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Trent & Peak Archaeology  
Unit 1, Holly Lane  
Chilwell  
Nottingham  
NG9 4AB

Tel: 0115 8967400  
Fax: 0115 925 9464  
Email: [trentpeak@yorkat.co.uk](mailto:trentpeak@yorkat.co.uk)



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Archaeological Trust Registered Charity in England and  
Wales (No. 509060) and Scotland (No. SCO42846)

Registered Office:  
47 Aldwark, York YO1 7BX

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<b>Prepared by</b>	M. Hurford, Project Officer
<b>Date</b>	27th February 2013
<b>Approved by</b>	R. Sheppard
<b>Signed</b>	
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## SUMMARY

- Trent & Peak Archaeology was commissioned by RJB Mining (UK) Ltd to conduct an archaeological watching brief in connection with the development of an opencast coal mine at Codnor, Derbyshire.
- The intrusive ground works monitored by the watching brief were carried out between 14<sup>th</sup> March 2002 and 9<sup>th</sup> April 2003. Most of the area covered during this period provided no evidence for archaeological activity; the exception is an area reported on here. The watching brief follows on from previous archaeological work undertaken in the area by Trent & Peak Archaeology (under earlier names of Trust and Unit) for RJB Mining (UK) Ltd.
- The site is located east of Codnor, on the west side of the Erewash Valley in South Derbyshire, centred at National Grid Reference SK 43550 49995 (Figure 1). It takes the form of an irregular polygon, its greatest dimensions being up to 1.5km north/south and 1.2km east/west. The development area is located on the Lower and Middle Coal Measures, with some sandstone outcropping in places and alluvial drift in the floor of the Erewash Valley.
- The development site is close to the medieval castle at Codnor and within an area with a long association with industrial activity, including coal and ironstone mining and iron production.
- During the watching brief significant archaeological remains were only encountered to the south of Area 11, comprising 18 irregular shaped pits dug into the natural ironstone deposits. The pits measured between 3m and 4m in diameter. They relate to ironstone mining, their size indicating a small-scale operation probably pre-dating the working of the site by Benjamin Outram & Co., which commenced in 1797.

**An the archaeological watching brief at Forge and Monument,  
Codnor, Derbyshire. OS Grid Ref. SK 43550 49995**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1. Trent & Peak Archaeology was commissioned by RJB Mining (UK) Ltd to conduct an archaeological watching brief in connection with the development of an opencast coal mine at Codnor, Derbyshire.

## **2. PROJECT BACKGROUND**

2.1. The site is located east of Codnor, on the west side of the Erewash Valley in South Derbyshire, centred at National Grid Reference SK 43550 49995 (Figure 1). It takes the form of an irregular polygon, its greatest dimensions being up to 1.5km north/south and 1.2km east/west. The development area is located on the Lower and Middle Coal Measures, with some sandstone outcropping in places and alluvial drift in the floor of the Erewash Valley.

2.2. The intrusive ground works monitored by the watching brief were carried out between 14<sup>th</sup> March 2002 and 9<sup>th</sup> April 2003. Most of the area covered during this period provided no evidence for archaeological activity; the exception is an area reported on here.

2.3 The watching brief was commissioned by RJB Mining (UK) Ltd in connection with the development of an opencast coal mine. It follows a desktop assessment and walkover survey of the proposed development area, undertaken in 1997 by Trent & Peak Archaeological Trust, which concluded that there were 28 areas of earthworks and archaeological remains (Garton and Morris 1997). Following the assessment an evaluation was undertaken of the development area by Trent & Peak Archaeological Unit, which confirmed the presence of archaeology, principally industrial in nature, relating to mining and dating to the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Challis and Richards 2001). Subsequently, in 2001 a watching brief was carried out which encountered a post-medieval industrial building and broadly contemporary rail or tram way (Richards and Challis 2002).

## **3. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

*Forge & Monument, Codnor: Evaluation Report.* TPAU report prepared for RJB Mining (UK) Ltd (Challis, K., 2001).

3.1. The development area is one with a long association with industrial activity, including coal and ironstone mining and iron production. There are intermittent references from the medieval and early post-medieval periods to industrial activities centred on coal and iron. John, Lord de Grey had a coal mine at Codnor by 1430; in 1582 John Zouche, a later lord of the manor, built the first blast furnace in the area at Loscoe; he leased his iron making interests in Codnor and Heanor to Francis Willoughby in 1594.

3.2 At the end of the 18th century, the industrial development of the region received additional impetus with the expansion of the canal network, which gave Codnor and Heanor greatly improved transportation to Cromford in the north and the River Trent to the south. Canal wharfs

were often linked to pitheads with tram or railways. A common practice in the locality was to lay iron rails on stone blocks for use by horse-drawn wagons. A number of such railways are shown on Sanderson's map of the area in 1835 crosses the development area from south-west to north-east, serving a number of pits and terminating at the Codnor Park iron works.

3.3 As demand for coal and iron grew, production moved from small-scale operations by individuals to large enterprises. In this region it was the Butterley Company, formerly Benjamin Outram & Co. and Shipley Park Collieries that emerged as the major operators.

## **4. OBJECTIVES**

4.1. The objective of the watching brief was to identify the presence of any archaeological remain that may be affected by the development and to achieve an appropriate level of preservation by record so as to better understand the development of the site.

## **5. RESULTS**

5.1 Significant archaeological remains were only encountered to the south of Area 11, comprising 18 irregular shaped pits measuring between 3m and 5m in width dug into the natural ironstone deposits (Figures 2 and 3). The pits were located in an area measuring c.120m by c.20m which had been machine stripped.

## **6. DISCUSSION**

6.1. In the coal measures of the Erewash valley claybound ironstone, with an iron content of about 30 per cent, occurs in layers, known locally as 'rakes' (Riden 1973 3). The ironstone was mined from the medieval period for the production of iron, initially in bloomery forges and then from the 16<sup>th</sup> century in blast furnaces. The size of the ironstone pits suggests a small scale mining enterprise, probably an individual farmer, who would backfill previously opened pits with the spoil produced from new ones thus allowing the land to be both farmed and mined. Large scale ironstone mining did not occur at Codnor until 1797 when Benjamin Outram & Co. began opening ironstone pits at Codnor Park (Riden 1973 7). Therefore, it is most likely that the ironstone pits encountered during the watching brief pre-date 1797.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

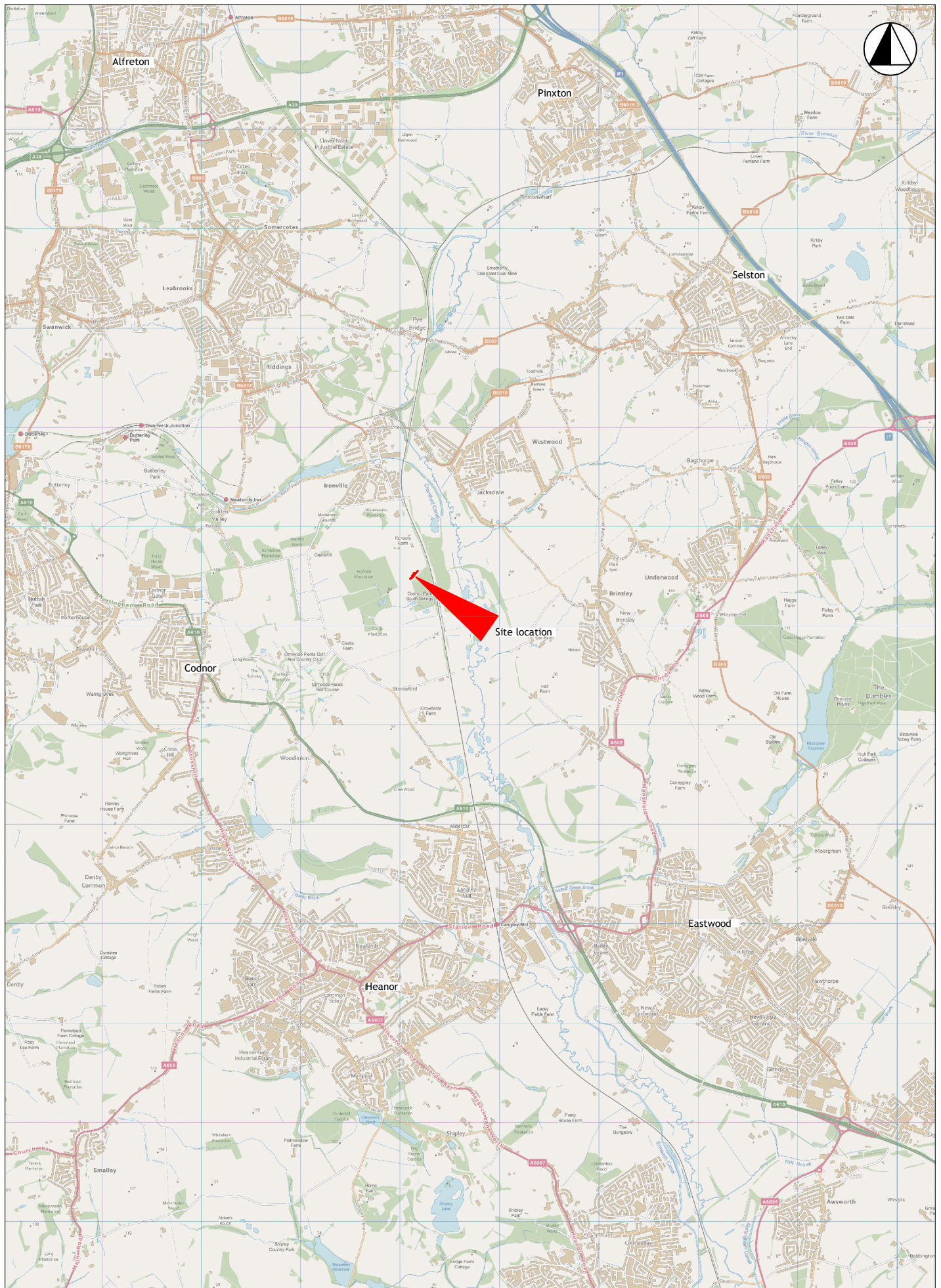
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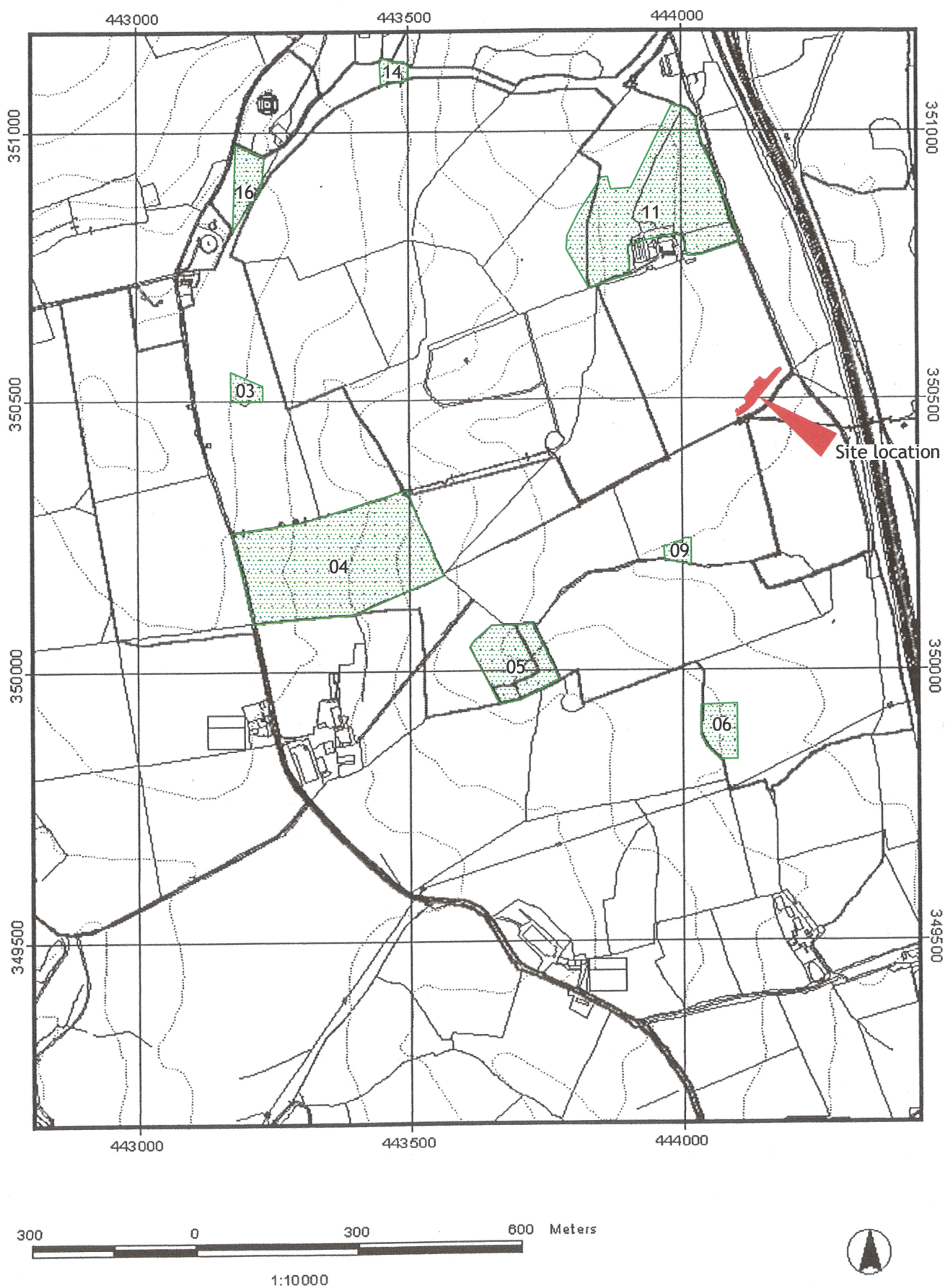
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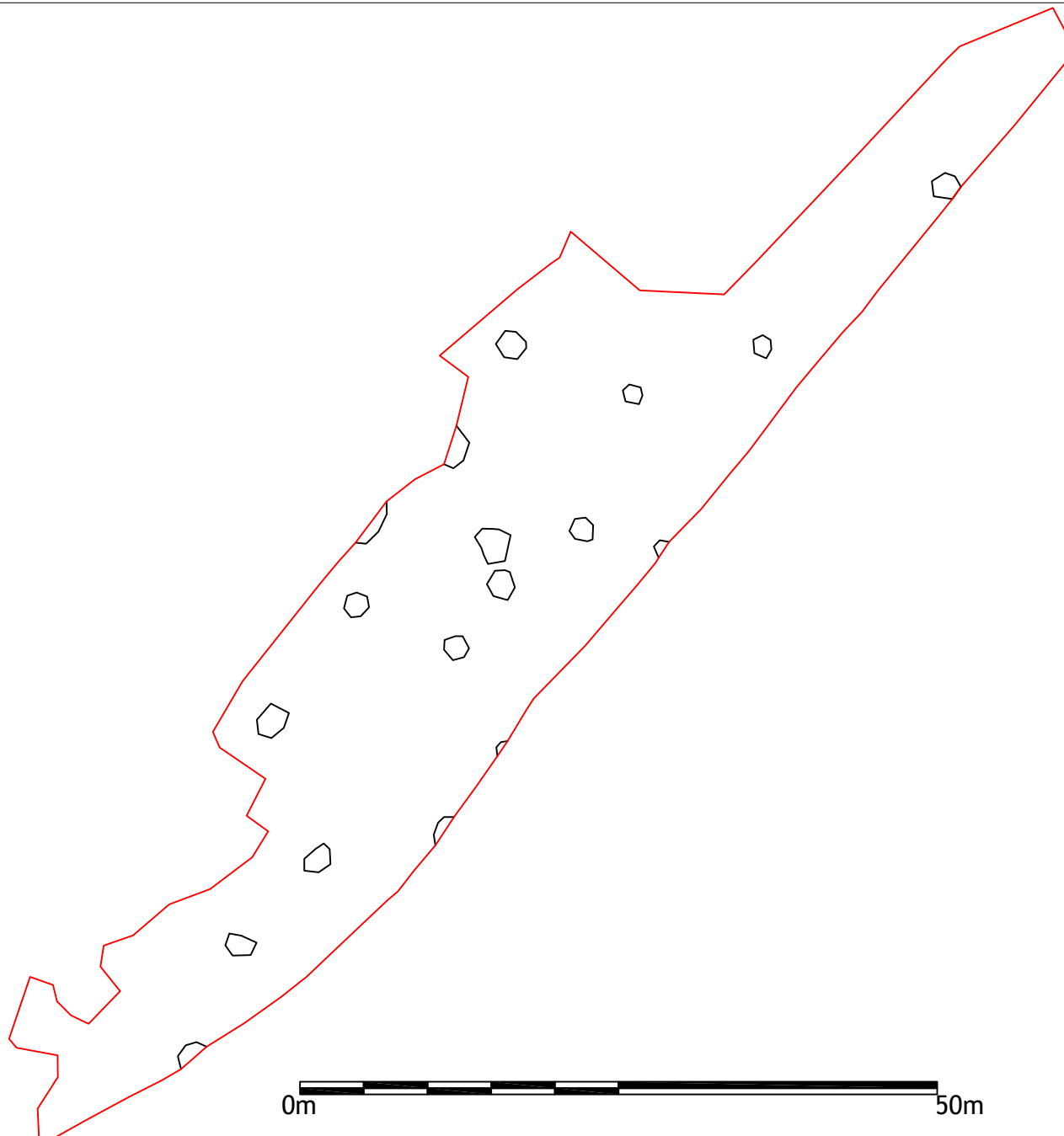
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