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# **Gascoigne Wood Spoil Disposal** *Archaeological Fieldwalking Project*

*March 1995*



**West Yorkshire**  
**Archaeology Service**

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# **Gascoigne Wood Spoil Disposal**

## ***Archaeological Fieldwalking Project***

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# Gascoigne Wood Spoil Disposal

## *Archaeological Fieldwalking Project*

### 1.0 Summary

#### *Client*

RJB Mining UK Ltd  
Colliery Operations (North)  
Kellingley Colliery  
Knottingley  
WF1 8DT

#### *Objectives*

To locate and determine the nature and extent of sites of archaeological interest within an area of c.60 hectares within an irregularly shaped area of land to the east of Sherburn-in-Elmet, North Yorkshire, prior to the possible selection of target areas for further archaeological evaluation.

#### *Methodology*

With the exception of c.8 hectares of pasture, the site consisted of open arable land suited to fieldwalking. The site was accurately gridded into 120m x 120m squares and further subdivided (by pacing) into 30m x 30m squares, to allow fieldwalking at traverse intervals of 15m. Finds were collected and bagged according to unique 30m x 30m grid square numbers and were later processed and washed for identification purposes.

The area of pasture was observed to contain a number of earthworks which were surveyed topographically. Soil profiles across these features were also taken, from which samples for magnetic susceptibility values were also removed.

#### *Results*

Although very few datable finds, such as flint and pottery sherds, were recovered three possible patterns of distribution were indicated to the east, south-west and north-west of the site. The widespread occurrence of fire-cracked pebbles (or 'pot-boilers'), which are undatable, suggested a further, more widespread pattern of distribution to the east and centre of the site. Despite the observed patterns, it was not possible to identify archaeological sites with any degree of certainty, although target areas for possible future work were indicated.



## **2.0 Introduction**

**2.1** The village of Sherburn-in-Elmet lies between Pontefract and York, towards the western side of the Vale of York. The area of study is centred at the eastern edge of the parish (SE 532326), some 5 miles west of Selby and to the south of the main road from Sherburn to Cawood (B1222).

**2.2** The underlying geology of this part of the Vale is sandstone, with a drift of lacustrine clays, silts and sands. These have developed Stagnogley soils, subject to long periods of fluctuating water tables. The archaeological implication is of poor agricultural soils, but, paradoxically, good preservation of archaeological deposits.

**2.3** An area of *c.* 1 km<sup>2</sup> was assessed in a desktop study in 1992 (Adams and Roberts; WYAS Report No. 82) covering the area of the present site and the area of proposed mine disturbance to the south, see Fig. 1. This revealed a number of sites or features of archaeological interest around the perimeter of the site, including moated sites, earthworks and traces of probable medieval ridge and furrow ploughing.

**2.4** Aerial reconnaissance to the east of Lennerton Farm, undertaken in 1993 (Roberts), identified a series of earthworks within the area of pasture, which were interpreted as the possible remains of medieval ridge and furrow ploughing. The etymological evidence for early medieval settlement (Lennerton=Leofnoth's farmstead; Smith 1963) in this area, however, gave cause for additional concern with respect to these earthworks.

**2.5** The requirement for fieldwalking was limited to the ploughed area covering roughly the northern half of the assessment area of Fig. 1 and is shown in Fig. 2. Fieldwalking was undertaken by four officers of West Yorkshire Archaeological Service during periods between 19th-25th August, 7th-15th September 1994 and concluded on 2nd February 1995 at the discretion of the landowner.

## **3.0 Methodology**

**3.1** The site was accurately gridded into 120m by 120m squares using a Geotronics Geodimeter 510 total station theodolite, tied into the National Grid using control stations (SN10 and SN11) previously established by the client. This grid was orientated to the direction of ploughing to facilitate fieldwalking and collection of finds.

**3.2** These grids were divided into 30m by 30m grids by pacing between the grid points of the above layout. This allowed fieldwalking traverses at the desired interval of 15m separation.

**3.3** Finds collected during the traverses were bagged and allocated a unique number/label according to each 30m by 30m grid within the 120m grid system.

**3.4** The distribution of finds was recreated using the most significant archaeological indicators, in particular, flint, fire-cracked pebbles, Romano-British and medieval pottery fragments, plotted against a digitised map within AutoCad. Modern and post-medieval sherds were rejected as archaeological indicators as they frequently occur due to manuring and ploughing





in these periods.

**3.5** To aid the interpretation of earthworks within the pasture field to the west of the site, a detailed topographical survey of features within the field was undertaken on 8th September 1994. Soil augur profiles and magnetic susceptibility measurements, using the Bartington MS2 susceptibility meter and the MS2D field coil, were also taken at 5 traverses across the above earthworks, *below* the turf. The location of susceptibility and auger/soil depth measurements is shown in Fig. 3.

## **4.0 Results (Fig. 2)**

### **4.1 Area A**

To the east of the centre of the site, Area A, a small number of flints (including one struck fragment and one blade; eleven in total) occur in an elongated scatter, c.300m south-east to north-west and c.45m north-east to south-west, from SE 53753275 to 53503289. Five sherds of Romano-British pottery were identified within this general spread and appear to be associated. This pattern might indicate the ploughed-out remains of a Romano-British ditch, orientated south-east to north-west.

### **4.2 Area B**

A scatter of flints and Romano-British pottery, c.300m east-west and 90m wide, was observed in the south-west corner of the site running approximately from SE 53183233 to 52863241. This group, however, contains only six flint fragments and three pot-sherds and therefore forms a very low density distribution pattern. The ceramic material occurs at the east end of this distribution.

### **4.3 Area C**

In the north-west corner of the site, the south-west 120m by 120m grid contains a group of seven sherds of later medieval (late 13th to 15th Century) unglazed gritty or pimply wares centred at SE 52713279. A further three late medieval sherds, of which one exhibited a pale green exterior glaze, were observed some 200m to the south, to the south-east of the area of pasture. These appear to reflect the medieval origin of the place-name of Lennerton, but more be inadvertently connected to the pattern of ridge and furrow ploughing, which may be visible within the pasture field to the west of the site.

### **4.4 The Distribution of Fire-cracked Pebbles**

A general scatter of burnt pebbles was observed across the site which grew noticeably more dense, with a density of c.7-17 pebbles per hectare, across the central third of the main grid of Fig. 2, an area of c.650m (east-west) by 360m (north-south) centred at SE 53453279. This pattern was certainly curtailed to the north and south by later ploughing of the field to either side of the main distribution which has clearly affected the fieldwalking and find collection results generally.

### **4.5 Area D: Topographical Survey**

**4.5.1** The detailed surface survey of the pasture field between the two gridded areas of Fig. 2, the results of which are shown in Fig. 3, shows a number of undulating banks along the north

edge of the field which occur at regular intervals of c.20m. These would tend to support the view that the earthworks, presented in the archaeological assessment (Roberts *op. cit*) as Banks 'a' and 'b', represent the southern extreme of north-south orientated ridge and furrow ploughing. The interval between 'plough ridges', however, seems unduly broad but this may be accounted for by the effects of weathering and the action of the plough along the southern edge of the field.

**4.5.2** The linear north-east to south-west bank, Bank 'c' within the assessment, c.108m in length by 12m in width, to the south of the terrace 'a', may represent a combination of field boundary and deliberate bank material. The soil profiles to the south-east of this feature showed a build-up of organic silt material, below c.0.4m from the surface to the maximum depth of the auger (1.2m), indicating alluvial deposition consistent with a stream or river bed. It is suggested that the southern boundary of this field, ie. Bank 'c', may have been deliberately built up in order to provide a barrier against flooding.

**4.5.3** Mound 'd', 94m by 60m in plan, rises by 1.13m, forming an irregular broad bank, possibly connected by its westward arm to Bank 'c'. Augering to the south-east of Mound 'd' revealed a thick organic peaty layer below the topsoil between 0.62m and 1.06m below the ground surface. The mound was found to consist of bands of silt clay and silt sand, similar to the deposits identified in the formation of terrace 'a'.

#### **4.6 Area D: Magnetic Susceptibility Survey**

The magnetic susceptibility measurements are presented in Appendix A. In general, the magnetic susceptibility measurements lie in the range of  $3-15 \times 10^{-6}$  cgs and closely reflect that of the underlying subsoil and natural deposits (measured in the laboratory as  $12 \times 10^{-6}$  cgs). The susceptibility reading at sample position 9, see Fig. 3, taken on a small knoll between Mounds 'a' and 'c', was markedly enhanced, probably by burning. Charcoal was clearly in evidence below the turf and within the auger hole, although it was not clear if these deposits were recent in origin.

## **5.0 Discussion**

### **5.1 Fieldwalking**

The concentration of fire-cracked pebbles within Area A indicates considerable archaeological activity, which, taken in conjunction with the small number of pottery fragments of Romano-British date, suggests a possible site of Romano-British origin. The presence of flint within the assemblage, almost certainly imported to the site (albeit few diagnostic fragments were recovered), would not be inconsistent with this interpretation, but might instead be used to argue the case for a small but significant level of prehistoric activity within the vicinity.

The similar, although markedly less dense, distribution of fire-cracked pebbles, flint and Romano-British pottery in the south-west corner of the site, Area B, might indicate the presence of archaeological deposits in this area, such as might be expected from a ploughed-out ditch, although this interpretation is less well-substantiated.

The scatter of late medieval wares in Area C, in the north-west corner of the site, appears unremarkable given the place-name evidence attached to Lennerton Farm. A ploughed-out



feature, such as a ditch, or medieval manuring are suggested causes.

### **5.2 The Topographical Survey**

The survey in Area D indicates the southern and easternmost extent of ridge and furrow ploughing to the east of the medieval farmstead suggested by the Lennerton place-name. The implications of the auger survey are that some mounding or terracing may have occurred naturally, but that the bank to the south, ie. Bank 'c', may have been built up in order to limit flood damage to the arable field to the north.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

The small quantity of datable material recovered from the fieldwalking survey allows only limited interpretation of the origin of finds and the likelihood of surviving archaeological deposits. Several areas of interest were, however, defined which may form the basis for further work.

## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Fieldwork**

Project Management  
Fieldwork

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K. Brown BA  
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P. White

Report  
Drawings

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## Appendix A

Sample number	Magnetic susceptibility $\times 10^{-6}$ cgs
1	14.4
2	14.4
3	8.7
4	12.6
5	7.4
6	9.3
7	10.3
8	7.9
9	404.2
10	5.7
11	4.9
12	7.7
13	7.9
14	7.1
15	9.9
16	5.0
17	8.5
18	3.7
19	6.1
20	4.5
21	6.7
22	5.5
23	7.0
24	6.8

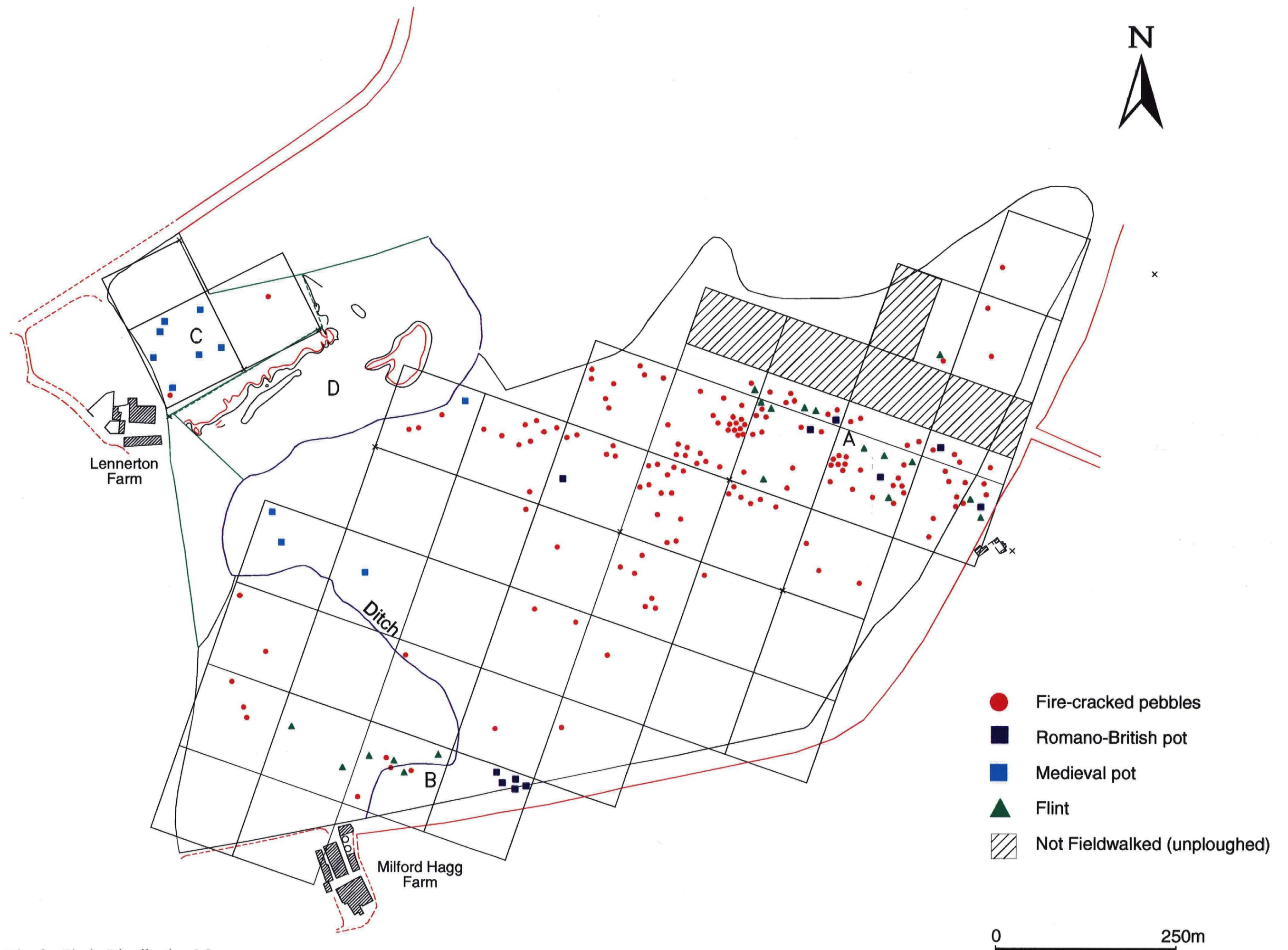


Fig. 2 Finds Distribution Map



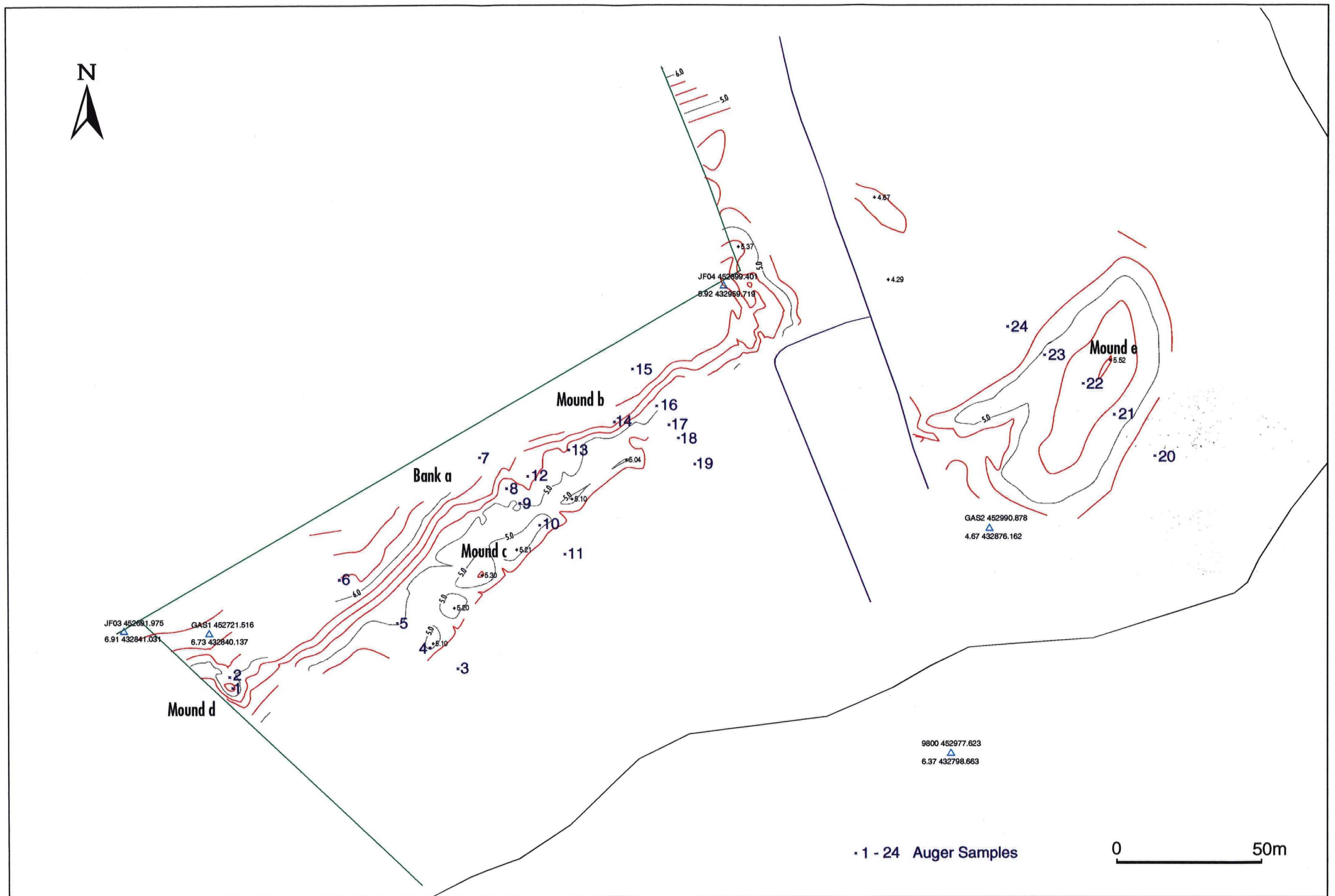


Fig. 3 Area D Topographical Survey