

*BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY  
FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT*

**An Archaeological Evaluation  
at Middle Hunscoate Farm, Charlecote,  
Warwickshire:**

**Fieldwork Set C**

*B.U.F.A.U.*



Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit

**Project No. 363.1**

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by

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**An Archaeological Evaluation at Middle Hunscombe Farm, Charlecote, Warwick:  
Fieldwork Set C: preliminary report**

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit

**INTRODUCTION**

The following report describes the results of the third set (Set C) of archaeological fieldwork, recording and reporting of an archaeological evaluation at Middle Hunscombe Farm, Charlecote, Warwick (Fig. 1: SP 245 552). The fieldwork was undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit in March 1996. The work was commissioned by Oxford Archaeological Associates Limited (OAA).

The site is located 4km east of Stratford-on-Avon (Fig 1). A desk top assessment of the site, was prepared in the form of a Cultural Heritage (Archaeology) Statement by OAA. The results of the first two sets of fieldwork (Sets A and B) are outlined in a report prepared by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit in December 1995 (BUFAU 1995). Set A was specifically concerned with two target areas with suspected archaeological features (Fig. 2). Target Area 1 contained a cropmark which was thought to have been created by a rectilinear enclosure (WA 4674) of late prehistoric or Roman date. Target Area 2 incorporated the possible location of a *hlow* or burial mound (identified during the desk-top assessment from documentary evidence). Set B involved a programme of fieldwalking across the whole of the study area.

The archaeological results of the geophysical survey and the trial trenching were generally negative. In Target Area 1 the resistance survey appeared to, at least partly, corroborate the evidence of the cropmark, suggesting the presence of an enclosure site. However, no trace of an enclosure ditch or bank could be identified in any of the trial trenches. Similarly it was not possible to identify in Target Area 2 any trace of the *hlow* or mound suggested by the documentary evidence.

The fieldwalking produced rather more promising results. In particular there appeared to be a significant concentration of flintwork in the southern area of the site, which may be related to prehistoric activity in the vicinity (Fig 3). A third target area (Target Area 3) was subsequently defined, which focused on this flint scatter. This target area was the subject of Set C of the fieldwork.

**OBJECTIVE**

The objective of Set C of the archaeological evaluation was to work towards gathering information to help establish presence/absence, character, extent, state of preservation and date of any archaeological deposits within Target Area 3.

## **METHOD**

### **Stage 1 - Intensive Field walking of Target Area 3**

A site grid of 5m squares based on the OS grid was established across the whole of Target Area 3. Finds were individually bagged and numbered and given 6 figure grid coordinates corresponding to the 5m square in which they were found.

The flintwork, prehistoric pottery, and possible and probable Roman pottery was entered onto a script file using Foxpro for Windows. Distribution plots of these classes of artefact were displayed on the digitized AutoCAD plots already established for the field boundaries. This enabled plans to be produced showing quantities of finds from each finds group per 5m square. These quantifications have been depicted as symbols varying in size according to quantity (Figs. 5-8).

When the surface collection was carried out, the two principal fields comprising Target Area 3 had been ploughed, harrowed, rolled and seeded. The grass shoots were just beginning to appear, but did not significantly hamper visibility of the ground surface.

### **Stage 2 - Trial trenching/test pitting**

Following an examination of the distribution plots from the intensive fieldwalking, a total of six trial trenches were excavated, each 30m x 1.6m (Fig. 2 and 4). One of the trenches (Trenches 17) was subsequently extended by 4m to determine the extent of a feature partly exposed at the southern end. The topsoil/ploughsoil horizon within each trench was removed by machine using a toothless ditching bucket. In all the trial trenches any underlying archaeological deposits or features that were identified were cleaned and a sufficient sample manually excavated in order to establish their extent, condition, nature, character, quality and (if possible) date.

The stratigraphy of all trial trenches was recorded even where no archaeological deposits were identified. Archaeological recording was undertaken using a continuous numbered context system and BUFAU pro-forma record cards. All archaeological features and deposits were photographed and a full drawn record at an appropriate scale was maintained. The locations of the trial trenches were surveyed using a Total Station Theodolite.

## RESULTS

### Stage 1 - The intensive fieldwalking (Figs. 5-8)

*The flint* (Fig. 5) - A total of 525 pieces of worked flint were collected during the fieldwalking. The distribution of this flint appears to form a significant cluster in the eastern, central part of the Target Area, suggesting the presence of settlement activity on site involving the use and production of flint tools.

*Prehistoric pottery* (Fig. 6) - Very few identifiable sherds of prehistoric pottery (only 6) could be identified. These tended to be very small and abraded and did not suggest any particular focus of activity. It seems probable that the majority of prehistoric sherds would not have survived in the ploughsoil.

*The Roman pottery* (Figs 7-8) - Following a preliminary sort of the material, a total of 208 sherds of possible Roman pottery were distinguished (Fig. 7). The majority of this material was heavily abraded, and it was considered likely that it might include a number of post-medieval fragments. Of these sherds, 46 (including rim sherds) could be confidently identified as Roman in date (Fig. 8). However, the distribution plots of both possible and probable Roman pottery produced a similar concentration in the southern part of the Target Area.

### Stage 2 - The trial trenches (Fig. 9)

In all the trial trenches the natural clay and sandstone bedrock were encountered at a depth of c. 0.5m. Features cutting these natural deposits were recorded in four of the six trenches; Trenches 17, 18, 19 and 20 (Fig. 9). These features were sealed by a layer of yellow-brown silty sand subsoil up to 0.25m deep. No features were recorded cutting this sandy subsoil. The overlying modern ploughsoil was up to 0.25m deep.

#### *Trench 17*

F946 - A small, sub-circular pit extending beyond the eastern edge of the trench. The recorded section was up to 0.65m wide and 0.33m deep with steep sides. It was filled by a dark grey-brown sandy clay. No finds. Interpretation - possibly caused by former vegetation.

F938 - A shallow linear ditch, orientated east-west. It was 2.6m wide and up to 0.3m deep with gradually sloping sides and a rounded base. It was filled with a dark-brown, sandy clay with occasional small stones. No finds. Interpretation - linear ditch of uncertain date.

F937 - A large shallow pit extending beyond the western edge of the trench. The recorded section was 4.7m long and up to 0.2m deep with gradual sloping sides and an irregular base. It was filled by a dark grey-brown silty clay with flecks of charcoal and a few sherds of prehistoric pottery. Interpretation - pit of prehistoric (?Late Bronze Age) date.

F939 - Small sub-circular pit extending beyond the western edge of trench. It was up to 0.94m wide and 0.4m deep with steep sides and filled by a dark grey-brown silty clay. No finds. Interpretation - possibly caused by former vegetation.

F940 - A wide and shallow linear feature orientated east-west at the southern end of the trench. It was 3.8m wide and up to 0.33m deep with a steep northern edge and a flat base. It was filled with a dark grey-brown sandy clay with flecks of charcoal and a number of fragments of prehistoric pottery. Interpretation - linear ditch of prehistoric (?Late Bronze Age) date.

F948 - A curvilinear gully cutting the fill of the linear ditch (F940). It was up to 0.5m wide and 0.1m deep with steep sides and a flat base. It was filled by a grey-brown, sandy silt. No finds. Interpretation - shallow gully of uncertain date.

#### *Trench 18*

F945 - An irregular-shaped feature extending beyond the edges of the trench. It was up to 1m wide and 0.4m deep and filled with a dark brown sandy silt. Interpretation - probably caused by former vegetation.

F944 - An irregular oval pit extending beyond the eastern edge of the trench. It was up to 1.7m wide and 0.5m deep with irregular steep sides and a flatish base. It was filled by a dark brown silty clay and fragments of possible Roman pottery. Interpretation - a small pit of possible Roman date.

#### *Trench 19*

F947 - A shallow and narrow linear ditch orientated east-west. It was 1.1m wide and up to 0.1m deep and filled by a dark grey-brown sandy clay with fragments of prehistoric and Romano-British pottery. Interpretation - shallow ditch of probable Roman date.

#### *Trench 20*

F943 - A narrow gully orientated northeast-southwest. It was up to 0.48m wide and 0.07m deep with steep sides and a flat base. It was filled by a grey-brown silty clay. No finds. Interpretation - shallow gully of uncertain date.

F942 - A narrow linear gully orientated north-south. It was up to 0.75m wide and 0.2m deep and filled with a silty clay with fragments of prehistoric and Romano-British pottery. Interpretation - gully of probable Roman date.

F941 - A narrow gully orientated northeast-southwest. It was up to 0.52m wide and 0.12m deep and filled with a grey-brown silty clay with two sherds of prehistoric pottery. Interpretation - gully of prehistoric or Roman date.

## THE FINDS

### The flint by L. H. Barfield

A total of 525 pieces of worked flint were recovered during the surface collection and 5 pieces from the trial trenches.

*Dating* - Significant datable finds include two leaf-shaped of Early Neolithic date (Two leaf-shaped arrowheads were also collected during the extensive fieldwalking - Set B). One barbed-and-tanged arrowhead dating to the Beaker to Early Bronze Age period was also recovered. One of the scrapers is a small thumb nail type which is also generally considered to be Beaker to Early Bronze Age. There are no other chronologically diagnostic artefacts.

The assemblage includes a relatively high proportion of blades which might indicate that the main component is Early Neolithic in date. However, the flake/blade component cannot be fully evaluated until the assemblage has been measured and compared with other collections in the vicinity. The trends which have been observed in Wessex and elsewhere in southern Britain may not be the same in the west Midlands where industries are affected by the poor quality of the flint sources.

*Raw material* - The flint is of mediocre quality. None of the pieces were definitely made from raw material imported from a long distance. The majority were from poor quality, irregular, water-rolled and fractured nodules possibly of boulder clay or gravel origin. The raw material is probably from sources elsewhere in southern Warwickshire. One of the future research questions would be to determine the location of the source of this material.

*Potential* - These observations suggest that, although the assemblage is mixed, there is a significant Early Neolithic component. Early Neolithic settlement sites, in contrast with the ritual sites like Barford (Oswald 1969), Charlecote (Ford 1969 and 1971) and Wasperton (Hughes and Crawford 1995), are rare in the west Midlands. Consequently, this site is of considerable potential importance for defining the character of the Early Neolithic in the region. A comparison with what appears to be a mainly Late Neolithic assemblage at Tiddington (Barfield forthcoming) will also be important. If there are clear differences in the characteristics of the flakes and blades from the two sites then we will improve our understanding of the two periods.

The assemblage can also be considered important in the wider context of flint scatters in the west Midlands. It appears to confirm the emerging picture of Neolithic occupation in the Avon valley in contrast with the upland Arden region to the north where flint scatters are almost all Mesolithic in date.

## **The prehistoric pottery** by Ann Woodward

A total of 89 sherds were recovered from the fills of five features in three trenches. Four fabrics are represented; they may be described in summary form as follows:

Fabric A: micaceous sand filler and large, angular, sparsely distributed inclusions of quartzite, crushed river gravel and grog.

Fabric B: sand filler, less micaceous than in A.

Fabric C: soft, red fabric with no visible filler. Daub.

Fabric D: grog inclusions and vesicles; ?organic filler.

### *Trench 17*

F940/17005 produced the largest assemblage (Fabric A: 59, Fabric B: 9 sherds) and six feature sherds were recognised. All these, except for one base angle, were in Fabric A. In fact, many of the A sherds probably derived from a single vessel.

Rims: simple, vertical and simple, everted.

Shoulder: rounded shoulder with vertical, finger-tip smearing below.

Base angles: expanded and simple with slight finger-tip treatment along outside of base.

F937/17003 contained four sherds of Fabric A, possibly from the same vessel represented in F940. Seven Fabric D fragments, two joining, were from a rectangular object, possibly a ceramic fire bar. There were also three pieces of daub.

### *Trenches 19 and 20 (F941, F942, F947)*

Six plain wall sherds in Fabric B and three pieces of daub.

### *Discussion*

The Fabric A sherds from features in Trench 17 belong to large, thin-walled jars of Late Bronze Age form, and the Fabric B base angle also appears of Late Bronze Age type. Although Late Bronze Age pottery is extremely rare in the west Midlands, similar vessels have been recorded from Wasperton (Woodward in Hughes *et al* in prep) and the Norton Lenchwick Bypass (Woodward forthcoming). In fact, Fabric A seems to be very similar, if not identical, to that employed for Late Bronze Age vessels at Wasperton, only 4km to the northeast. At both Wasperton and Norton Lenchwick, the late Bronze Age vessels had been deposited deliberately in pits, in the vicinity of Neolithic and early Bronze Age activity, apparently of a ritual nature.

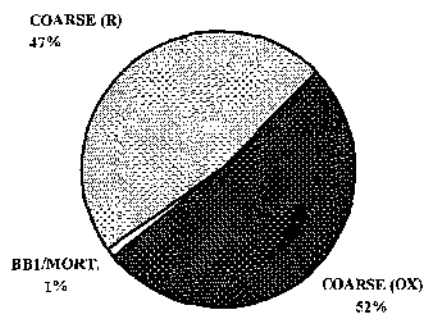
The sherds from Trenches 19 and 20, further to the south, are finer in texture, and may be of Iron Age rather than Late Bronze Age date.



## The Roman pottery by Jane Evans

270 sherds of pottery were identified as Romano-British. The majority (258 sherds) came from fieldwalking. These were all very fragmentary and abraded, making identification problematic. Although only 45 sherds were selected for plotting as 'definitely Roman' during the preliminary scan, the remainder are most probably contemporary. Only 12 sherds were recovered from the excavated trenches, described in detail below. Considering the assemblage as a whole, the majority comprised coarse reduced (125 sherds) and oxidised wares (138 sherds), mainly Severn Valley wares. The proportion of Severn Valley wares seemed unusually high for this part of Warwickshire (Jeremy Evans pers. comm.), although this might perhaps reflect a bias in collection with red wares being more easily spotted in the soil. The assemblage probably dates to the second century A.D. Two sherds of BB1 indicate some activity later than c A.D. 120; one of them, a flat rimmed bowl or dish, is a second-century type. A single bead and flange rim of Mancetter Hartshill mortaria would also probably date to the second century. There was no Samian included in the assemblage, which might indicate a 'rural' character for the site.

PROPORTION OF WARES BY % COUNT



### *Trench 18 F944/20003*

5 oxidised body sherds, not closely datable.

### *Trench 19 F947/19003*

A grog tempered jar rim dating to the first or second century; 2 joining rim sherds from a burnished flat rimmed bowl, probably copying a second century BB1 type; 1 grey ware body sherd and the rim from a small oxidised jar.

### *Trench 20 F943/20005*

2 body sherds in sandy grey ware, 1 from a carinated bowl.

## DISCUSSION

Both the surface collection and the trial trenches appear to indicate the former presence of activity dating to the Neolithic/Early Bronze Age, the Late Bronze Age/Iron Age and Romano-British periods.

The flint scatter appears to suggest that the main focus of Neolithic/Early Bronze Age activity was in the east-central part of Target Area 3. This flintwork appears to include a substantial component dating to the earlier Neolithic. Such evidence for earlier Neolithic settlement activity in the region is very rare, indicating the former presence of a site at Middle Hunscore of considerable potential importance. However, no trace of any features containing Neolithic/Early Bronze Age pottery were recorded during the trial trenching. It seems likely that any features associated with Neolithic/Early Bronze Age activity were not particularly substantial and may have been destroyed by subsequent ploughing.

The pottery from two of the features in Trench 17 (F937 and F940) suggest that this area was also the focus of Late Bronze Age activity. The features in Trench 17 include broad and shallow features including two possible ditches (F938 and F940) and a possible pit-like feature (F937). These features have presumably been heavily truncated by medieval and post-medieval ploughing. The superimposition of a later prehistoric settlement over activity dating to the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age has been recorded elsewhere in the locality, most notably at Wasperton (Hughes and Crawford 1995, Hughes *et al* in prep).

By contrast, the principal focus of Roman activity appears to be in the southern part of the Target Area. The pottery scatter presumably originates from former settlement activity associated with the truncated, narrow and shallow gullies recorded in Trenches 19 and 20 (F941-943 and F947). Two of these features contained small quantities of Romano-British pottery. The pit containing Roman pottery in Trench 18 suggests that this activity may have extended to the north of these gullies. However, there was no surviving evidence for any structures and no significant quantities of building material fragments (such as roofing tile) were collected during the intensive fieldwalking.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The project was monitored by David Griffiths on behalf of OAA and Douglas Moir on behalf of Warwickshire County Council. Many thanks to the farmer, Mr David White, for his co-operation and assistance.

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**Table 1 - Trial trenches: finds and feature summary**

| Trench No | Feature No | Interpretation | Flint       | Prehist pot | R-B pot | Misc   | Spot date/comment |
|-----------|------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|---------|--------|-------------------|
| 15        | 15000      | topsoil        | 2 flakes    |             |         |        |                   |
|           | 15001      | subsoil        | 1 scraper   |             |         |        |                   |
| 17        | F946       | natural pit    |             |             |         |        |                   |
|           | F938       | ditch          |             |             |         |        |                   |
|           | F937       | pit            | 1 core frag | 11          |         | 2 daub | Late Bronze Age   |
|           | F939       | natural pit    |             |             |         |        |                   |
|           | F940       | ditch          | 1 core frag | 68          |         |        | Late Bronze Age   |
|           | F948       | gully          |             |             |         |        |                   |
| 18        | F945       | natural pit    |             |             |         |        |                   |
|           | F944       | pit            |             |             | 5       |        | Roman             |
| 19        | F947       | gully          |             | 2           | 5       |        | Roman             |
| 20        | F943       | gully          |             |             |         |        |                   |
|           | F942       | gully          |             | 2           | 2       |        | Roman             |
|           | F941       | gully          |             | 2           |         | 3 daub | ?Iron Age/Roman   |

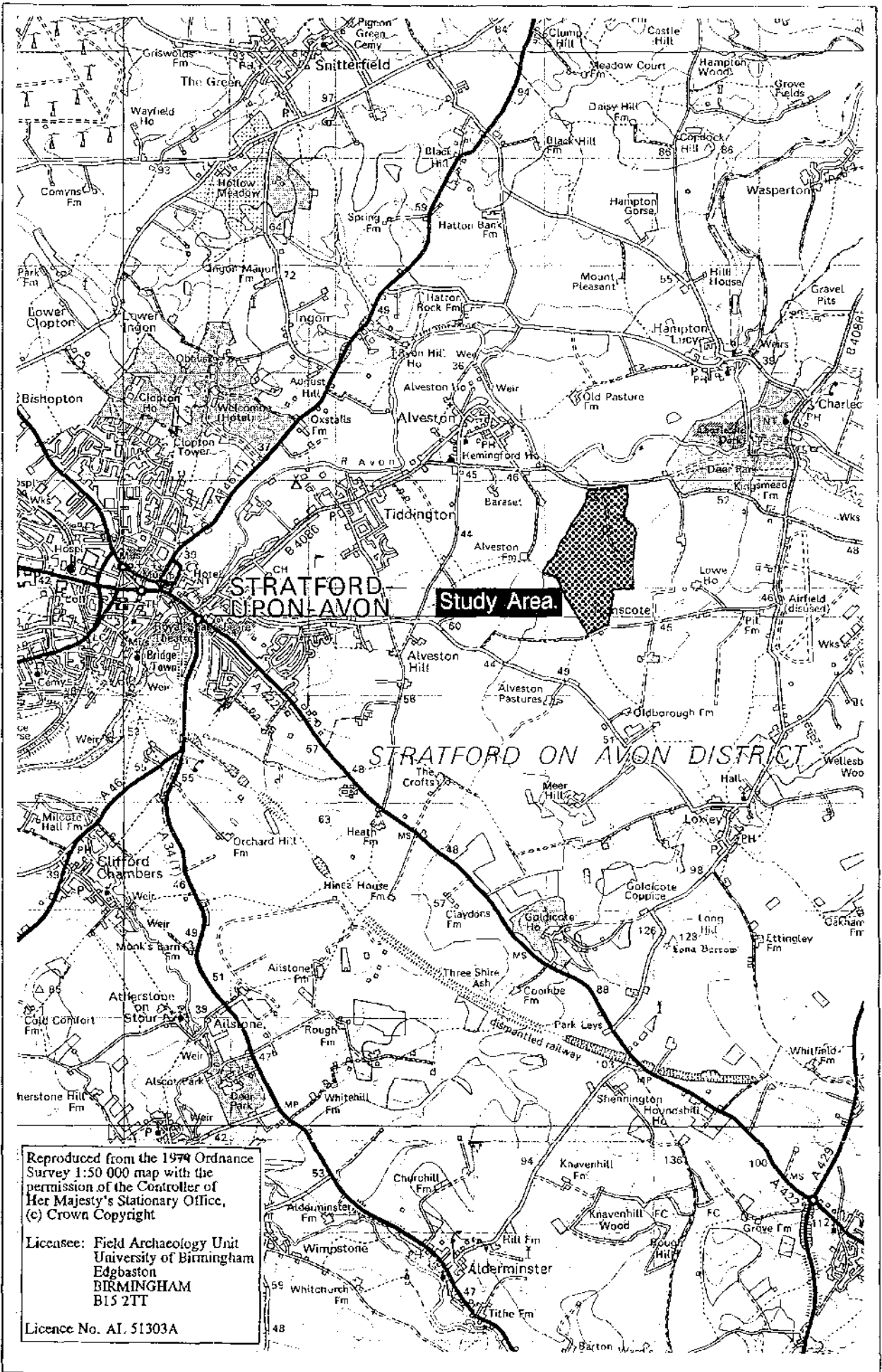


Fig. 1 Location

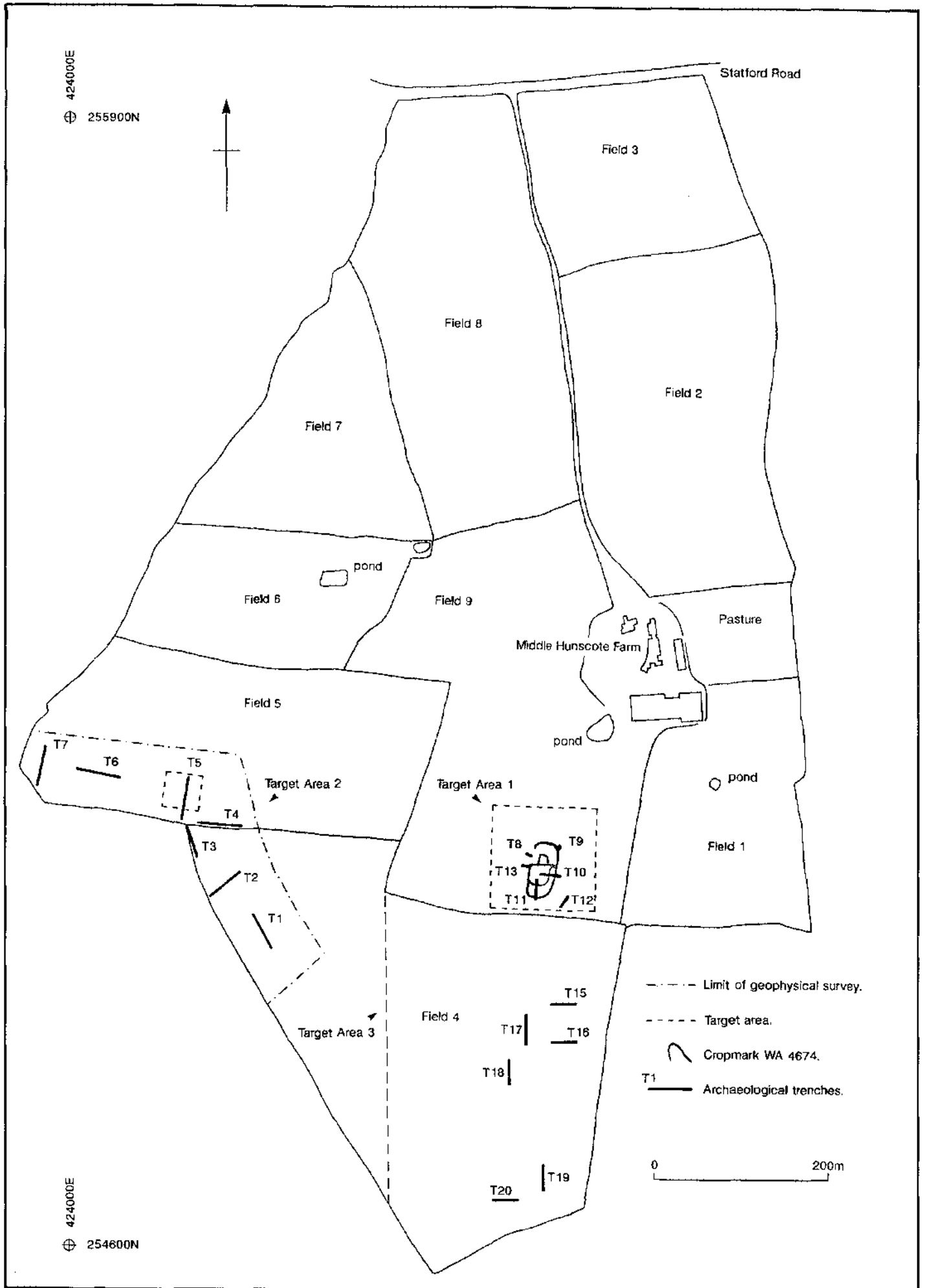


Fig. 2 Location of Target Areas

Middle Hunscombe 1995  
Fieldwalking

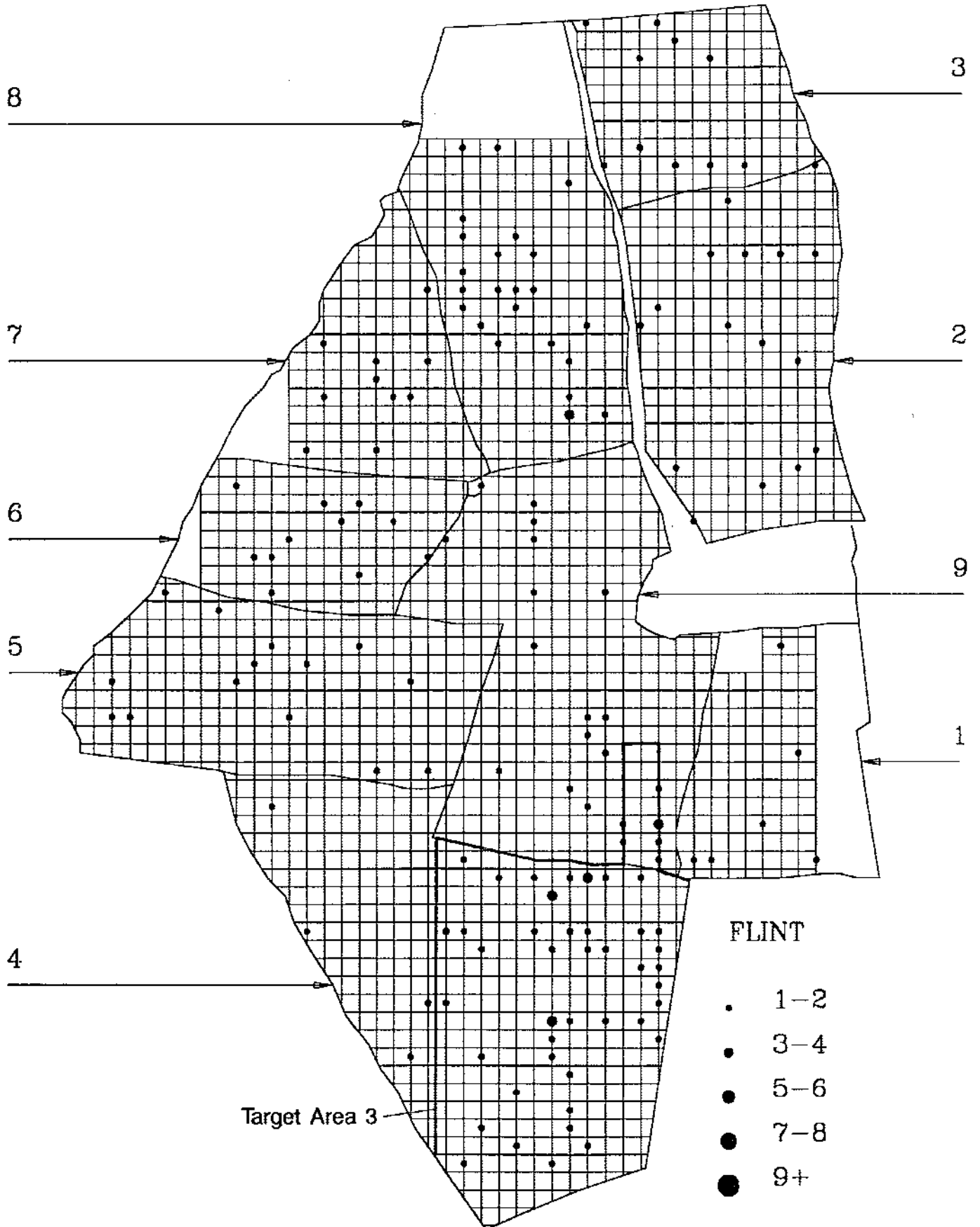


Fig. 3 Distribution of flint from extensive fieldwalking - Set B

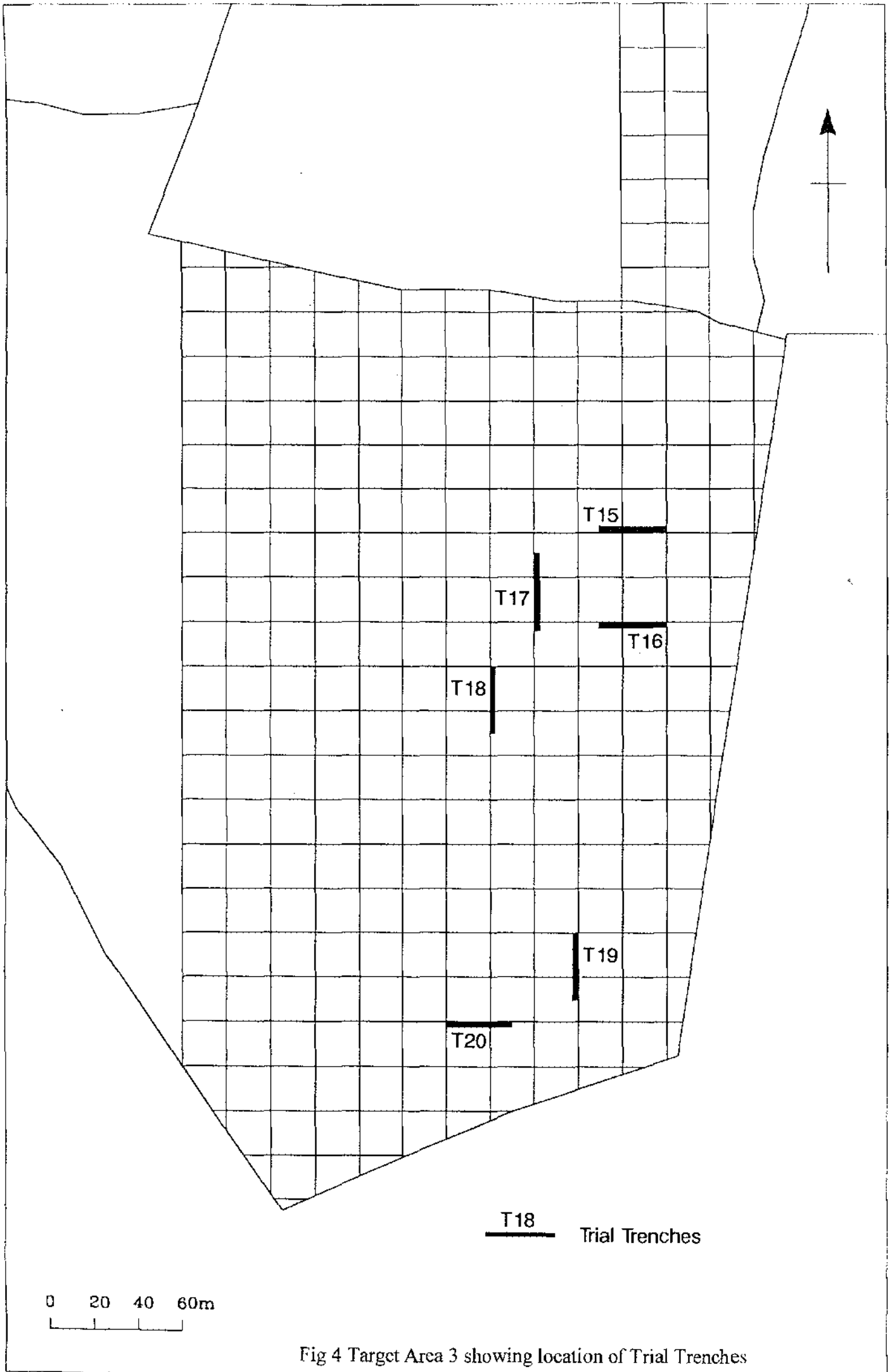


Fig 4 Target Area 3 showing location of Trial Trenches



Middle Hunscombe Farm  
Intensive Fieldwalking Survey  
Flint

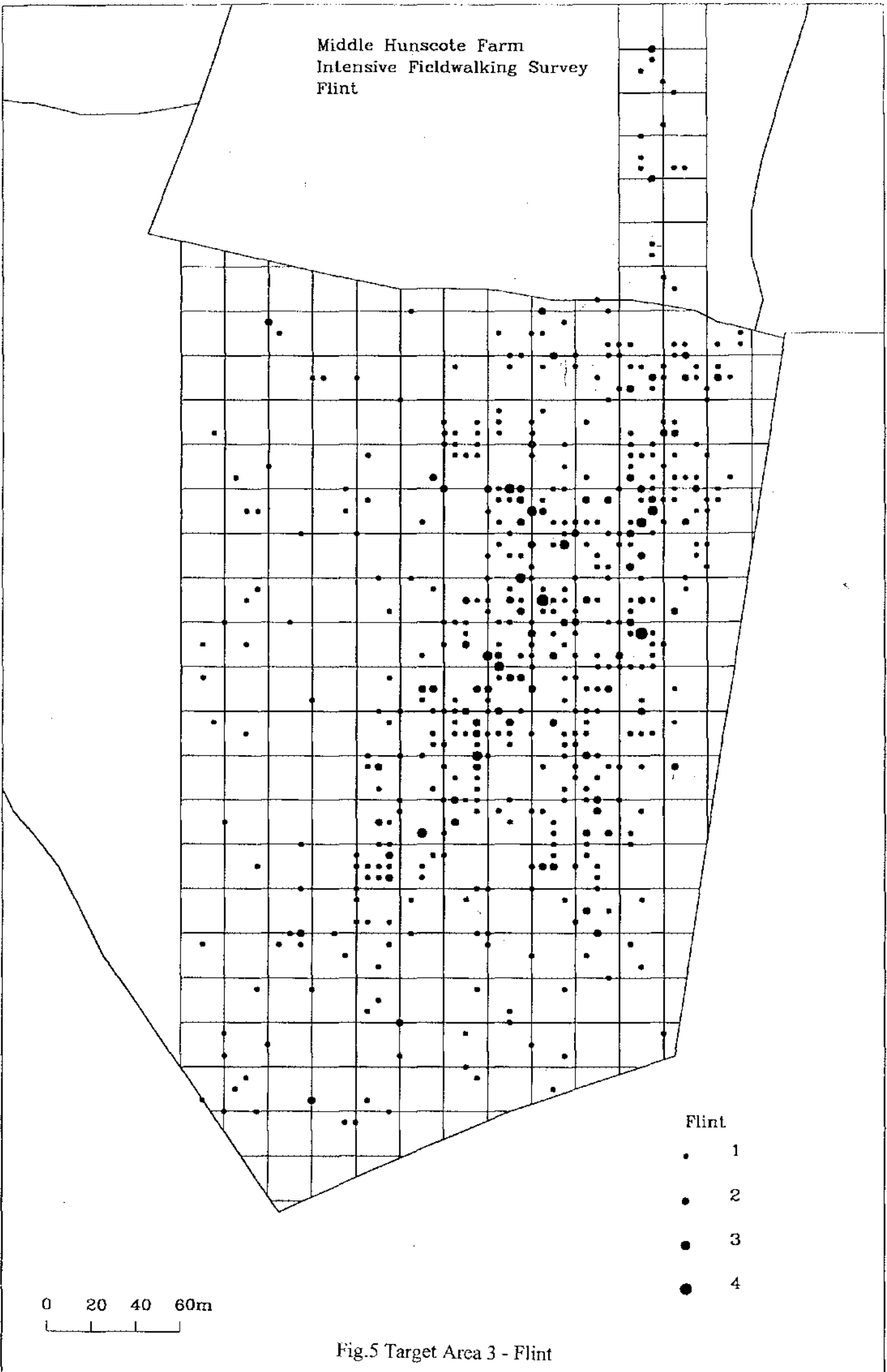
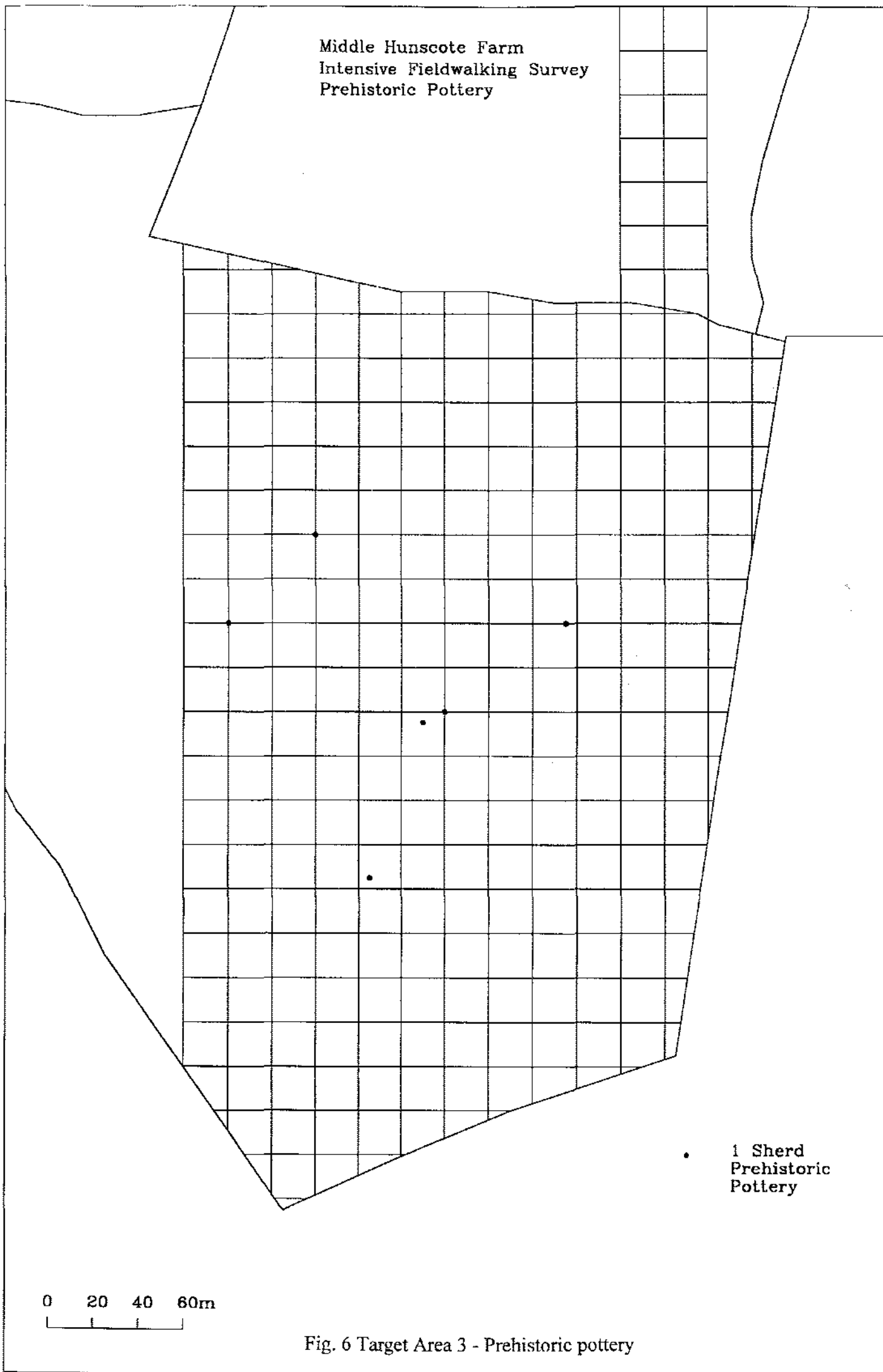


Fig.5 Target Area 3 - Flint

Middle Hunscombe Farm  
Intensive Fieldwalking Survey  
Prehistoric Pottery

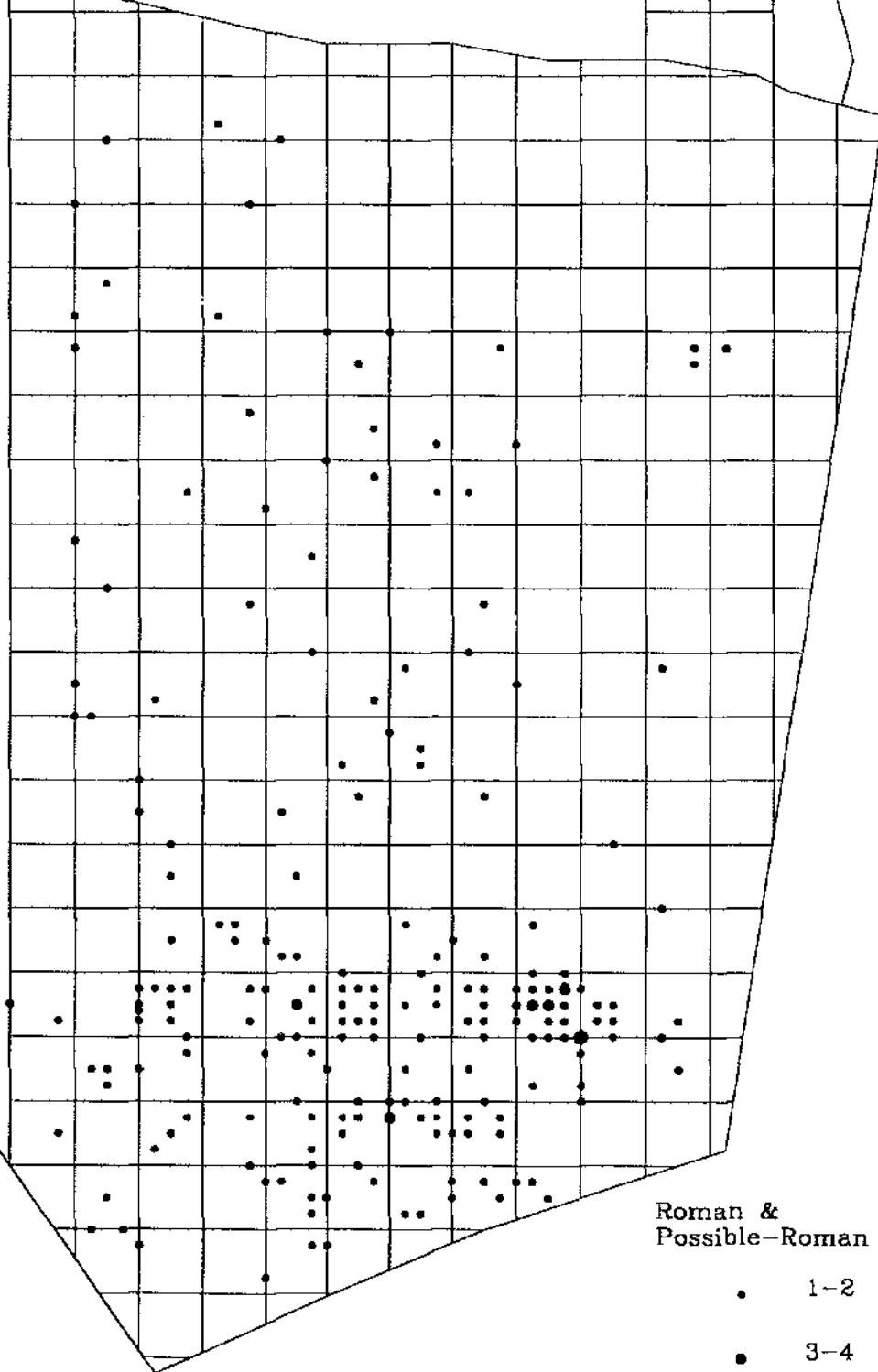


0 20 40 60m

• 1 Sherd  
Prehistoric  
Pottery

Fig. 6 Target Area 3 - Prehistoric pottery

Middle Hunscombe Farm  
Intensive Fieldwalking Survey  
Roman & Possible-Roman Pottery



Roman &  
Possible-Roman Pottery

- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5-6

0 20 40 60m

Fig. 7 Target Area 3 - Probable and possible Roman pottery

Middle Hunscoate Farm  
Intensive Fieldwalking Survey  
Roman Pottery

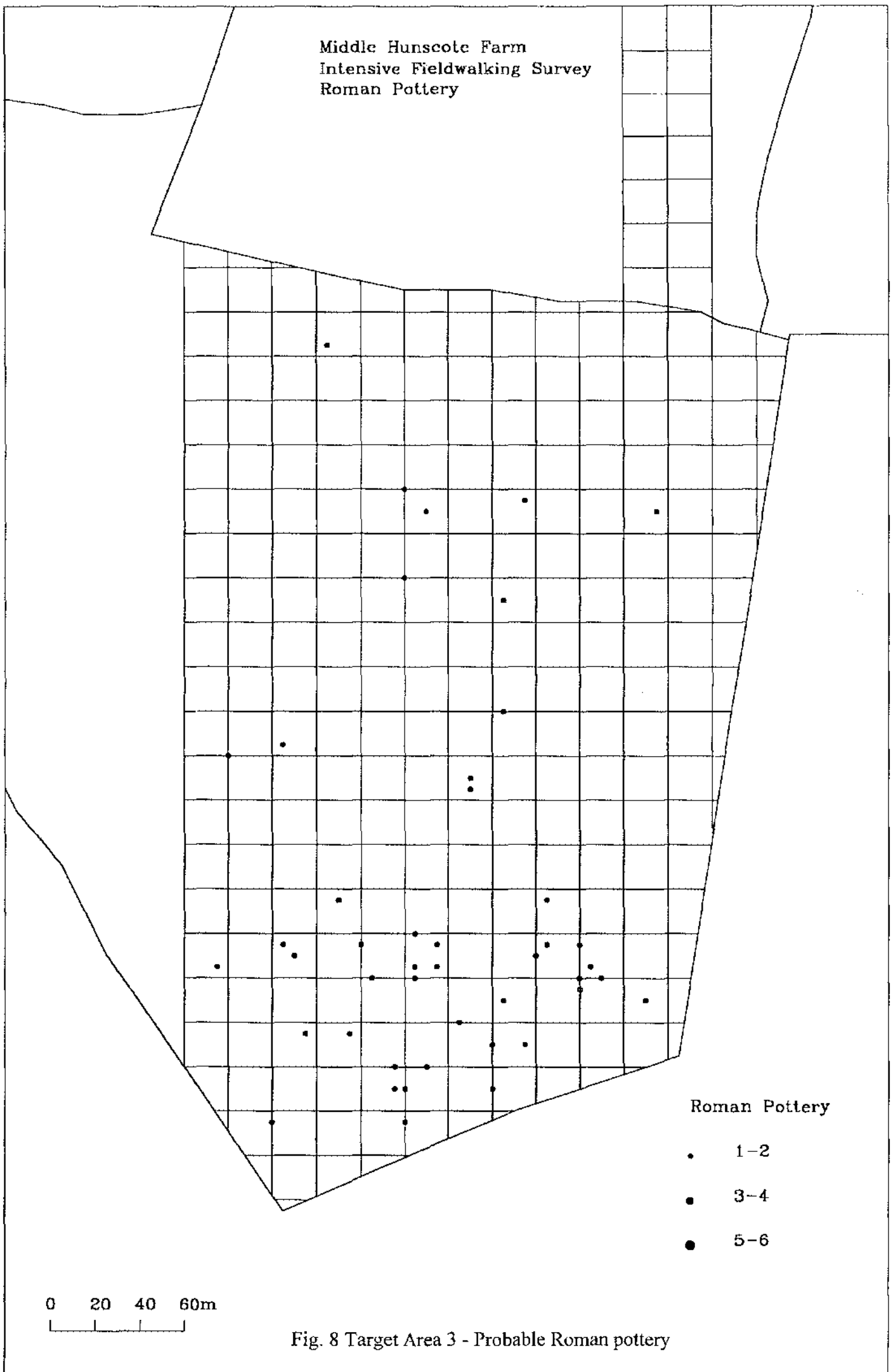


Fig. 8 Target Area 3 - Probable Roman pottery