



**Ledsham Road, Little Sutton,
Ellesmere Port, Cheshire.
Site Code 140
Surface Artefact Collection
Final Report**

Prepared for Redrow Homes Ltd and Terence O'Rourke Ltd

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Non-Technical Summary

This report provides an assessment of the results of a programme of surface artefact collection or fieldwalking conducted on land to the south of Ledsham Road (B5463), Little Sutton, Ellesmere Port.

Artefacts were collected from ploughed agricultural land and their distribution plotted on to appropriate maps. The earliest evidence found consists of a small Prehistoric flint tool, two sherds of pottery which may be Roman in date and two medieval sherds of pottery; however, these are generally widely dispersed and unlikely to relate to significant archaeological deposits.

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1. Introduction

This document is a report on a programme of surface artefact collection or fieldwalking conducted by National Museums Liverpool Field Archaeology Unit (NMLFAU) on behalf of Terence O'Rourke Ltd in advance of a planning application for Redrow Homes Ltd.

The project relates to the production of the heritage chapter of an Environmental Statement for submission of an outline planning application for residential development at the site. The area for fieldwalking covers approximately 59 ha of largely agricultural land lying south-west of the village core (see Fig. 1).

The survey was conducted according to a specification prepared by NMLFAU and was commissioned by Redrow Homes (the Employer). The specification was agreed with the Development Control Archaeologist for Cheshire West and Chester Council (the Curator).

Fieldwork was conducted between 12 March and 14 March 2012, finds processing and production of this report between 15 March and 21 March 2012.

2. Methodology

Finds and transects were logged using two Garmin Etrex Legend GPS units. Transects were spaced at 10 m intervals and logged using the same instrument. At the time of the survey these were registering an accuracy of ± 2 m.

Eight fields were assigned numbers according to NMLFAU's numbering system. This is a combined alphabetic and numeric system recording the township where the project is located and the field walked. For instance, on this project LS 04 would be field 04 in Little Sutton. This system allows new projects to be integrated with NMLFAU's existing fieldwalking archive and has been used in production of the site archive.

Transects were recorded as track logs by GPS (Fig.2), though for clarity these are omitted from distribution plots in this report. Transects were spaced at 10 m intervals, though in some fields (LS03 and LS04) crop growth was very advanced and transects were spaced along wheel runs and other areas of lower growth giving a slightly wider spacing. Fields LS 005 and LS06 were walked by pairs of fieldworkers working from opposite sides of the field. Because the field edges were not parallel, some transects overlap (Fig. 2).

All finds were bagged in the field and the location marked as a waypoint using the GPS (Figs. 3 and 4). The waypoint number was then transcribed to the bag and used as the basis for cataloguing the finds.

All surface finds were collected according to the collection strategy detailed in the method statement.

Finds were processed as detailed method statement (Adams 2012) and entered into a finds database retained as part of the site archive.

All of the fields walked were either under winter crops or stubble with c. 10-50% of the soil surface visible. There was some variation in these conditions across the stubble areas where locally visibility was reduced to 5-10%. Elsewhere in these areas (for example in wheel ruts) visibility was higher at c. 90%. This was compensated for decreasing the transect spacing in the clearer areas.

Whilst not ideal it was considered that these conditions provided adequate conditions for the survey, though there will have been a significant impact upon the quality of the data gathered by reducing the potential for artefact retrieval, though this effect is impossible to quantify.

Three fields, LS 05, LS 07 and LS 08, towards the south and south-west corner of the study area were not investigated due to dense, well-established rape crops (Fig. 1).

3. Site descriptions

3.1 Field LS 01

This field lies to the immediate south of the B5463, Ledsham Road (NGR Centred SJ 36282 76345) and the area assigned for fieldwalking covers c. 5.26 ha (Fig. 1). The topography in this area was generally flat with slight undulations. Weather conditions at the time of the survey were cold, dry and bright with scattered cloud. No earthworks were noted.

The soils in this field were clayey and mid-brown in colour. The ploughed area was under a sprouted wheat or barley crop, c.15 cm in height, though sufficient of the soil surface (c. 30%) was visible in these areas to render artefact collection viable.

A dense scatter of 19th century brick and rubble was noted in the south-east corner of the field; otherwise the quantity of post medieval and modern (i.e. 18th/19th century AD and later) pottery appeared to be very low.

In general the density of surface finds from this parcel was extremely low, the only pre-19th century f

ind consisted of three joining moulded slipware sherds, which were 18th century in date (Fig. 4).

3.2 Field LS 02

This field lies to the south of Sutton New Hall Farm (NGR Centred SJ 36478 75840) and the area assigned for fieldwalking covers c. 17.79 ha (Fig. 1). Weather conditions at the time of the survey were cold, dry and bright with scattered cloud. No earthworks were noted.

This field lay on a slight north – south aligned ridge. The soils in this field were clayey and mid-brown in colour at the lower lying western edge, slightly paler and with frequent red sandstone fragments on the higher ground to the east. The sandstone fragments may be due to the presence of bedrock close to the surface. The ploughed area was under a sprouted wheat or barley crop, c. 15 cm in height, though sufficient of the soil surface (c. 30%) was visible in these areas to render artefact collection viable.

Most of the artefacts from this field dated to the 18th/19th century (Fig. 4) consisting mainly of late darkware coarseware sherds and one tobacco pipe stem fragment. The

most archaeologically significant material was a Prehistoric struck flint (Fig. 3) found at the southern end of the field.

3.3 Field LS 03

This field lies to the west of field LS 01, immediately south of the B5463, Ledsham Road (NGR Centred SJ 36026 76245) and the area assigned for fieldwalking covers c. 11.73 ha (Fig. 1). Weather conditions at the time of the survey were cold, dry and bright with scattered cloud. No earthworks were noted. The only significant topographic feature was a slight slope from east to west.

The soils in this field were similar to those in LS 01 being clayey and mid-brown in colour. The ploughed area was under a sprouted wheat or barley crop, c. 20 cm in height, though sufficient of the soil surface (c. 10-30%) was visible in these areas to render artefact collection viable. Transects were restricted to vehicle tracks and clearer sow lines; dense crop areas were avoided. The topography in this area gradually sloped westwards.

Only small quantities of artefacts were recovered from this field including 18th/19th century earthenwares and darkwares (Fig. 4). However, one sherd of earlier 17th century darkware was identified (Fig. 4) and a sherd of 13th/14th century medieval pottery (Fig. 3).

3.4 Field LS 04

This field lies immediately to the south of field LS 03 (NGR Centred SJ 36185 75931) and the area assigned for fieldwalking covers c. 10.98 ha (Fig. 1). Weather conditions at the time of the survey were cold, dry and bright with scattered cloud. No earthworks were noted. The only significant topographic feature was a slight slope from east to west.

The soils in this field were similar to those in LS 03 being clayey and mid-brown in colour. The field was under a sprouted wheat or barley crop, c. 15 - 20 cm in height, though sufficient of the soil surface (c. 10-30%) was visible in these areas to render artefact collection viable, though this increased in areas to 50% towards the north-west corner of the field. Transects were restricted to vehicle tracks and clearer sow lines; dense crop areas were avoided. The topography in this area gradually sloped westwards at the northern end becoming slightly steeper to the south.

The surface artefacts collected consisted mainly of a concentration of 18th and 19th century ceramics in the north-west corner of the field (Fig. 4) and included coarse and fine darkwares, self-coloured earthenware, unglazed flower-pot, tobacco pipe stem and brick fragments. A single sherd of possible Roman pottery was found at the southern end of the field and one sherd of 14th/15th century medieval pottery in its north-west corner (Fig. 3).

3.5 Field LS 05

This field lies south of field LS 04 (NGR Centred SJ 36363 75638) and the area assigned for fieldwalking covers c. 3.37 ha (Fig. 1). The field was covered was in a dense crop of rape and was not in a walkable condition.

3.6 Field LS 06

This field lies adjacent to the south-east corner of field LS 02, immediately north of the waterworks, (NGR Centred SJ 36861 75756) and the area assigned for fieldwalking covers c. 5.18 ha (Fig. 1). Weather conditions at the time of the survey were cold, dry and bright with scattered cloud. No earthworks were noted.

The soils in this field were similar to those in LS 01 being clayey and mid-brown in colour, boulder clay was observed in the south-east corner. At the time of the survey the area was under a sprouted crop of winter wheat or similar c. 10 cm high and with c. 30-50% of the soil surface visible, though this reduced in patchy areas to 10% towards the centre of the field. The topography in this area was generally flat with a gradual slope to the east.

The surface artefacts collected consisted mainly of occasional 18th and 19th century ceramics (Fig. 4). Occasional fragments of late 19th century and later rubble was observed along the southern edge of the field. One sherd of earlier 17th century darkware (Fig. 4) and a single sherd of possible Roman pottery were also collected from this field (Fig. 3).

3.7 Field LS 07

This field lies immediately south of the waterworks (NGR Centred SJ 37037 75391) and the area assigned for fieldwalking covers c. 3.24 ha (Fig. 1). The field was covered was in a dense crop of rape and was not in a walkable condition.

3.8 Field LS 08

This field lies immediately to the south-east of field LS 07 (NGR Centred SJ 37166 75297) and the area assigned for fieldwalking covers c. 2.57 ha (Fig. 1). The field was covered was in a dense crop of rape and was not in a walkable condition.

4. Finds Report

A total of 76 finds, weighing 1881.5 grams, have been recovered from fields LS 01, LS 02, LS 03, LS 04 and LS 06 (Figs. 3 and 4).

The majority of finds date to the 18th – 19th/20th centuries and consist mainly of post-medieval pottery. However, medieval (13th – 14th century AD) sherds, two possible Romano-British finds and one Prehistoric struck flint were also recovered.

Field	Material	Total	Weight (grams)
LS 01	Pottery	3	38.4
LS 02	Ceramic	2	5.2
LS 02	Flint	2	6.8
LS 02	Pottery	9	359.1
LS 02	Stone (natural)	2	318.1
LS 03	Flint	4	54.3
LS 03	Pottery	6	94.2
LS 04	Ceramic	9	41.1
LS 04	Flint	1	16.4
LS 04	Pottery	24	761.2
LS 06	Ceramic	1	1.4

Field	Material	Total	Weight (grams)
LS 06	Pottery	13	185.3
	Total =	76	1881.5g

Table 1. Total and weight of material type by field

4.1 Prehistoric

A total of 7 flints were recovered from fields LS 02, LS 03 and LS 04, weighing 77.5 grams in total. However, only one from field LS 02 could be classed as a probable Prehistoric struck flint (Fig 3); the other six were discarded as unworked (Fig. 4). The presence of such a small number of widely distributed tools is unlikely to relate to extensive or intensive settlement and is more likely to indicate a small temporary camp or camps occupied for c. 1-2 nights each. Finds of this type are not generally associated with extensive below ground deposits, though there may be additional material in the surrounding top-soil (R. Cowell pers. comm.).

4.2 Romano-British

Two small, very abraded sherds of possible oxidised ware, weighing 3.5 grams in total, were recovered from fields LS 04 and LS 06 (Fig. 3) and are possibly Romano-British in date. The significance of this material is difficult to assess and is discussed in more detail below.

4.3 Medieval

Fields LS 03 and LS 04 produced two sherds of medieval pottery weighing a total of 9.8 grams and dating to the 13th to 15th century AD (Fig. 3). These are in local sandy fabrics identified previously on sites in Merseyside and Cheshire such as Brunt Boggart, Tarbock (Cowell & Philpott 2000), Prescot and Roby (R. Philpott, pers. comm.).

4.4 Post-medieval

The scatter of post-medieval pottery found is typical of that found across the region as domestic debris. Most are locally produced darkwares of types commonly produced in south-west Lancashire from the 18th century onwards, though there were two sherds of 17th century pottery from fields LS 03 and LS 06. The early and late dark-glazed wares were the largest group of pottery found totalling 42 sherds, weighing 1325.8 grams.

Dark-glazed wares are the most common type of pottery found in the post-medieval period and range in date from the 17th century to the 20th century. Analysis of the dark-glazed wares was roughly broken down chronologically into 'early' (17th/18th century) and 'late' (18th/19th century) types of coarse or fine wares.

Field	Type	Total	Weight (in grams)
LS 02	Late dark-glazed coarseware	9	359.1
LS 03	?Early dark-glazed coarseware	1	14.0
LS 03	Late dark-glazed coarseware	1	19.1
LS 03	Early dark-glazed coarseware	1	35.8
LS 04	Late dark-glazed ?fineware	3	30.0
LS 04	Late dark-glazed coarseware	15	675.2
LS 04	Late dark-glazed fineware	1	12.3

Field	Type	Total	Weight (in grams)
LS 06	Agate-bodied earthenware	1	3.5
LS 06	Early dark-glazed coarseware	1	10.2
LS 06	Late dark-glazed coarseware	9	166.6
	Total =	42	1325.8g

Table 2. Post-medieval dark-glazed ware pottery

Alongside the dark-glazed earthenware, there was a small amount of finer types of post-medieval (18th/19th century) and later pottery recovered including self-coloured earthenware, slipware and general unglazed earthenware totalling 10 sherds, weighing 100.5 grams.

Field	Type	Total	Weight (in grams)
LS 01	Press-moulded flat slipware	3	38.4
LS 03	?Self-coloured earthenware	1	5.1
LS 03	Decorated Slipware	1	17.1
LS 04	Self-coloured earthenware	1	2.9
LS 04	Unglazed earthenware	2	32.0
LS 06	Unglazed earthenware	2	5.0
	Total =	10	100.5g

Table 3. Other post-medieval and later pottery fine wares

Two stem fragments of clay tobacco pipe, weighing 3.9 grams in total, were recovered from LS 02 and LS 04, and are mainly 18th or 19th century in date.

Nine other general ceramic finds were recovered across fields LS 02, LS 04 and LS 06 including brick fragments and small fired clay lumps from an unknown origin (probably brick or tile fragments), with a combined weight of 39.8 grams.

5. Assessment of Significance

Results are summarised by period.

5.1 Prehistoric

Only one worked flint was recovered from the field LS 02 (Fig. 3) and probably relates to a short term, temporary camp, rather than prolonged occupation and is unlikely to indicate significant sub-surface deposits. There is some potential for the presence of additional material in the surrounding top-soil, though this is considered to be slight.

5.2 Romano-British

Two small, badly abraded fragments of pottery identified as possible Oxidsed Ware were present in fields LS 04 and LS 06 (Fig. 3). This locally produced pottery fabric is common on Romano-British occupation sites in the area (Cowell & Philpott 2000, Philpott & Adams 2010) but being very similar in character to later medieval and post-medieval ceramics in the area can be difficult to identify in the absence of diagnostic sherds such as rims or bases.

In the absence of other evidence the significance of these sherds is difficult to assess. Neither fragment could be positively identified; there is the possibility that both sherds

are much later in date. In addition the sherds were widely distributed, being separated by a distance of 600 m.

Pottery was used in low quantities on settlement sites of this period in the region and very low densities of pottery in top soil can relate to extensive below ground evidence. For example at Court Farm, Halewood (Adams & Philpott in prep) a scatter of c. 15 sherds of a broadly similar character across 12 ha related to a group of c. 15 buildings occupied between the 2nd to 4th centuries AD. A similar density of pottery was associated with a well defined cropmark enclosure at Southworth Hall Farm, Winwick which later trial trenching dated to the 2nd - 4th century AD (R. Philpott pers. comm.).

However, the finds from this fieldwalking are very widely distributed and are not associated with other diagnostic material so it is difficult to relate them to any potential archaeological site.

5.3 Medieval

Both sherds of medieval pottery were collected from within fields LS 03 and LS 04, separated by a distance of 320 m (Fig. 3). In consequence it is unlikely that they are related to each other and probably relate to Sutton Hall Farm rather than to any other settlement.

5.4 Post-Medieval

The quantity and range of post-medieval ceramics and other material recovered is typical of fields in the region and is consistent of the dispersal of domestic debris from local farms and villages through manuring (Fig. 4). This material is unlikely to relate to archaeological deposits.

6. Conclusions

The fieldwalking has produced direct evidence for human activity during the Prehistoric, Medieval and Post-Medieval periods though this is widely distributed and in general unlikely to relate to significant archaeological deposits. There is some evidence of activity during the Roman period, though this consists of two small, badly abraded, sherds which cannot be positively identified and are not associated with any other evidence. Whilst these sherds may be associated with settlement it is impossible to associate this with a defined location. It is likely that the two sherds of medieval pottery originated from Sutton Hall Farm, as are the post-medieval finds.

7. Bibliography

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8. Figures

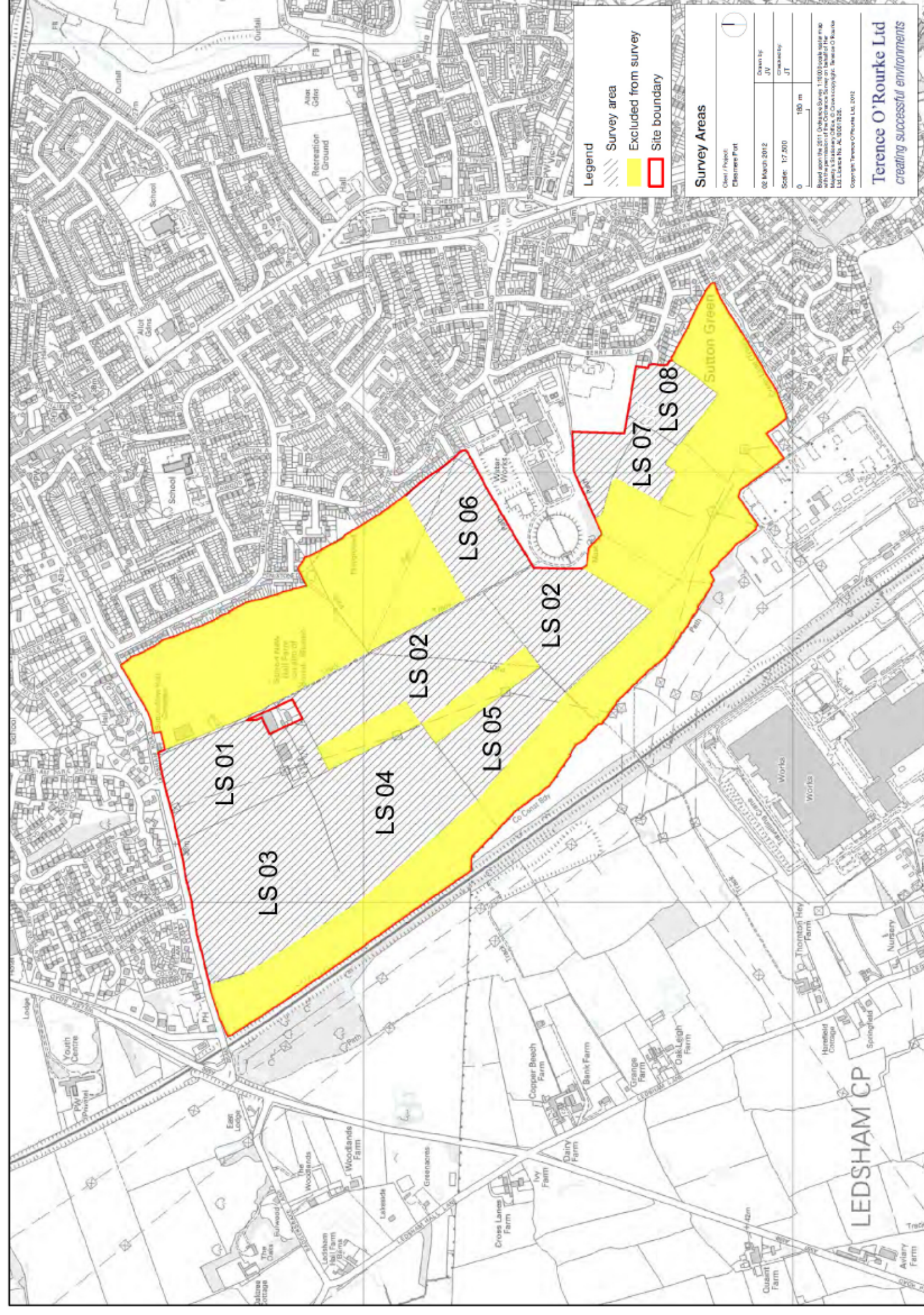


Fig. 1. Site location and survey area.

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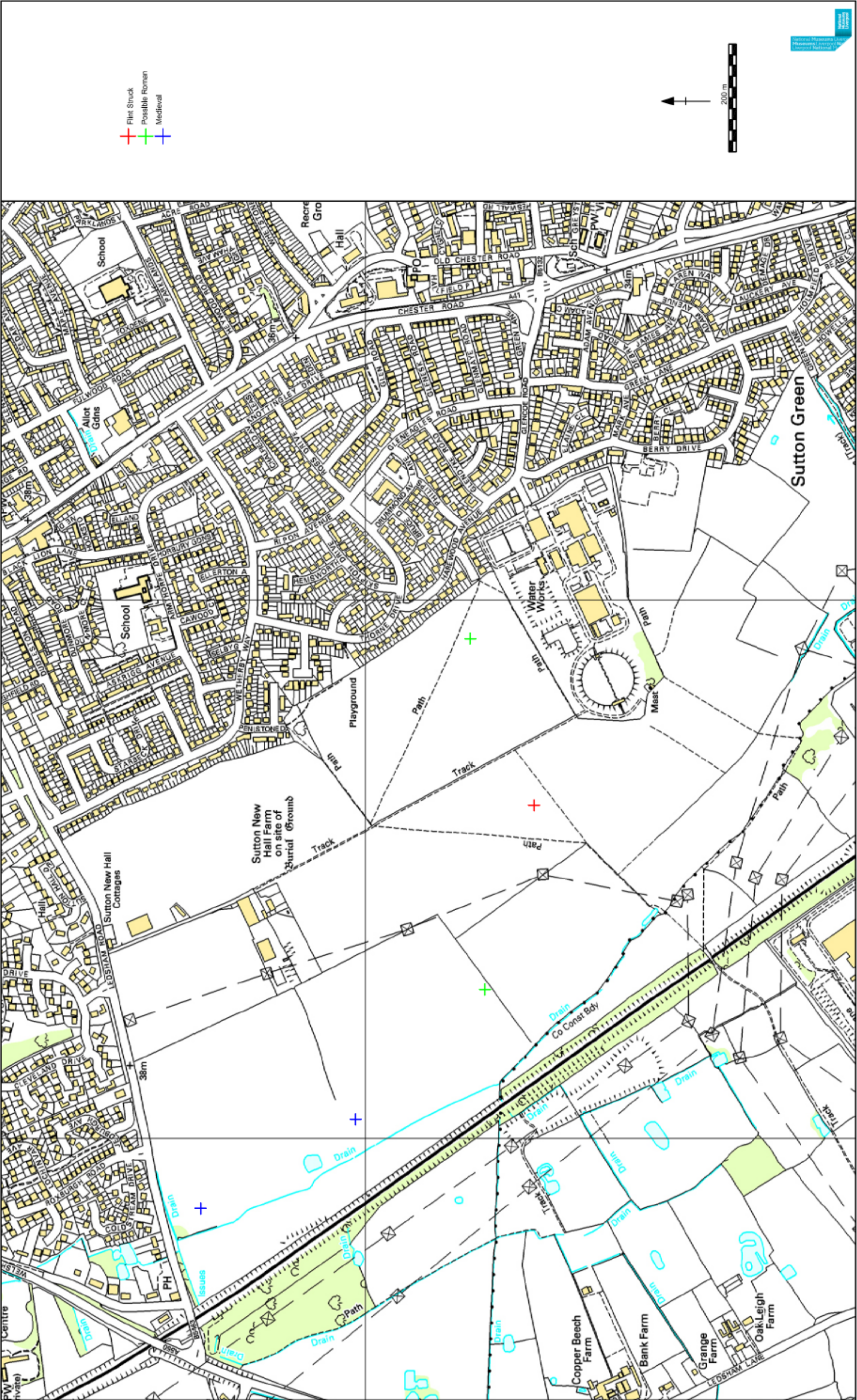


Fig. 3. Possible Romano-British, Medieval and Prehistoric artefacts.

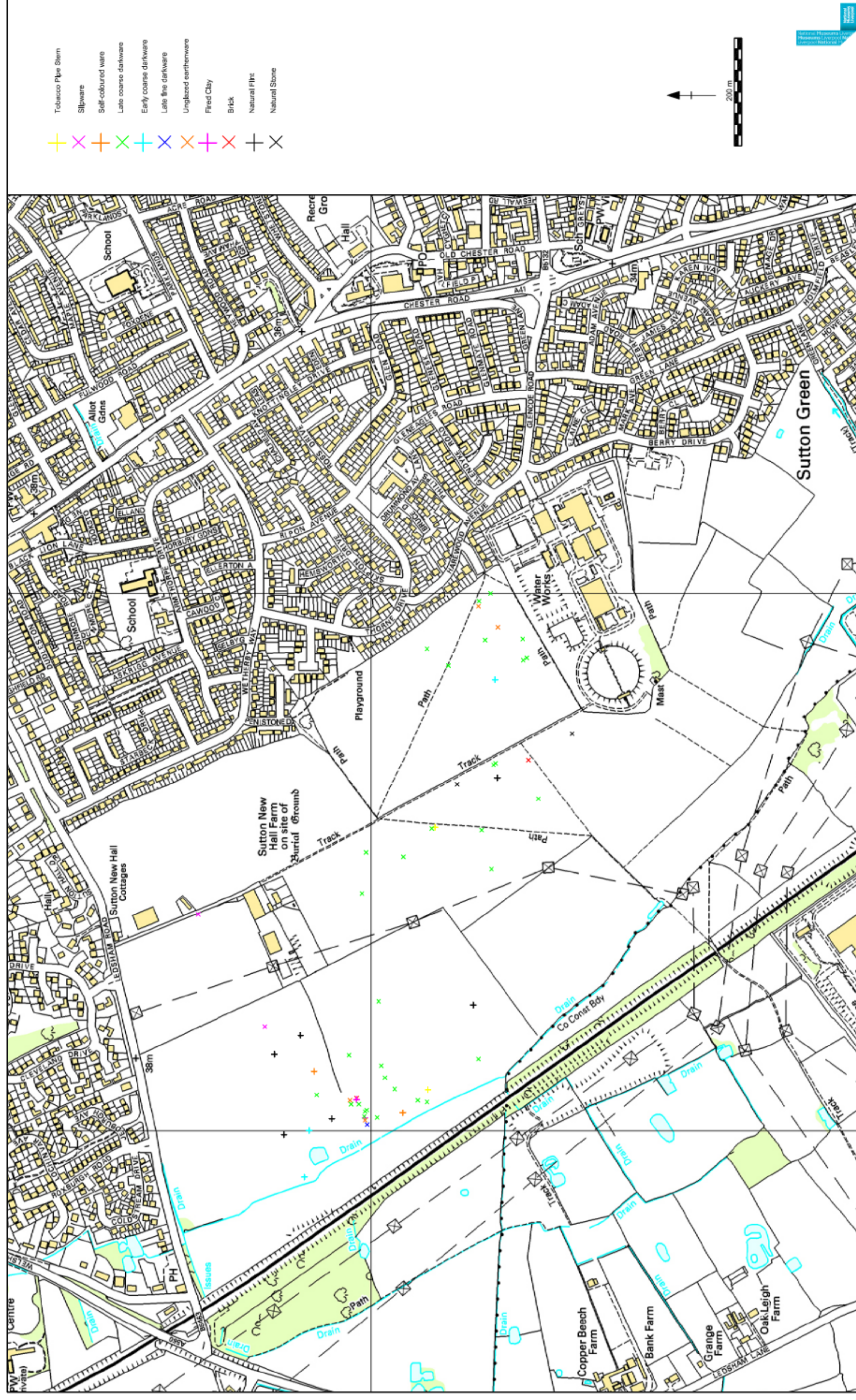


Fig. 4. 17th, 18th, 19th century and later artefacts.