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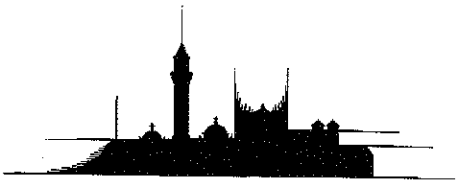
BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY
FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT

Winterbrook, Wallingford Oxfordshire, 1998: Fieldwalking



B.U.F.A.U.

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
Project No. 509
January 1998

Winterbrook, Wallingford Oxfordshire, 1998: Fieldwalking

by
Lucie Dingwall and Annette Hancocks

With a contribution from L. Bevan

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Introduction

The following report details the results of archaeological fieldwork at Winterbrook, Wallingford, Oxfordshire (centred on NGR SU 602 883). The fieldwork was undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit during January 1998 and was commissioned by CPM on behalf of Wates Built Homes. The work consisted of systematic fieldwalking and surface collection of artefacts from the ploughsoil.

Background

The site consists of a 7ha arable field lying on the southern edge of the town of Wallingford (fig. 1) on gravels deposited by the River Thames, which lies some 500m to the east of the field. The land is slightly irregular, with ridges of higher ground in places, and concentrations of natural flint are visible in the ploughsoil at the southern end of the field (fig. 2). At the time of the fieldwork, the land was under a wheat crop approximately 10cm high, and according to the farmer had been ploughed to a depth of 15-22cm. The density of the crop varied throughout the field, but there were very few areas where the crop was sufficiently dense to affect the visibility of artefacts. The weather conditions were relatively favourable, with dry, periodically sunny weather following a period of fairly heavy rain.

Cropmarks indicated the presence of ring ditches in the east of the field (SMR 8593 and SMR 2995) and a geophysical survey carried out over this area by Geophysical Surveys of Bradford (fig. 3, areas J, K1 and K2) also showed evidence of negative features in the corresponding area. A desk-based assessment (CPM 1997) identified other significant archaeological sites in the vicinity. In the field to the north of Winterbrook Lane, Iron Age sherds (SMR 2991) and a Roman inhumation with a 4th-century pottery vessel (SMR 2992) were recovered from a gas main trench in 1948. An Iron Age settlement (SMR 2225/26), now built over, lay to the north of this. The town of Wallingford itself is a former Anglo-Saxon burgh.

Objective

The objective of the surface collection was to provide information to help determine the nature, extent, character and date of any potential archaeological features present on the site.

Methodology

Initially, $100m^2$ grids were laid out using a Sokkia Set 3 Total Station, and surveyed in to the national grid. These were then divided into 20m intervals using an optical

square and tapes. Fieldwalking was carried out along 20m transects and 20m stints and all artefact categories were collected.

Field boundaries were digitised using AutoCAD, and the more prominent land undulations were also sketched on to the fieldwalking grid and subsequently digitised, in order to relate them to the fieldwalking results (fig. 2). Finds data were queried using Access database software and the results fed into AutoCAD. Density plots were then produced displaying quantities of finds for each category for the 20m survey intervals. These quantifications are depicted as circles, varying in size, according to the quantity of finds recovered (figs. 4-12).

The finds were quantified by occurrence only (Table 1) and sorted into the following groups: flint (flakes and chunks, cores and tools), prehistoric pottery, Romano-British pottery, medieval pottery, post-medieval pottery, ceramic tile, clay pipe, iron nails, post-medieval vessel glass, slag, animal bone, shell and miscellaneous finds. Only finds that were of archaeological interest were processed and in the case of flint and pottery a detailed assessment of the assemblage was undertaken by specialists in these areas.

The Results

Table 1 shows the quantifications of finds recovered and the distribution plots of each of the finds categories are presented in Figures 4-12. The results are described below.

	Quantity
Prehistoric pot	2
Roman pot	3
Medieval pot	4
Post-medieval pot	152
Flint flakes	285
Flint chunks	87
Flint cores	43
Flint tools inc. retouched flakes	7
Ceramic tile (post-medieval)	511
Clay pipe (post-medieval)	35
Iron nails	1
Slag	9
Window glass (modern)	4
Vessel glass (post-medieval)	37
Animal bone	9
Other building material (roofing slate)	6
Other stone	3
Shell (oyster)	7
Miscellaneous	5

Table 1: Summary of finds recovered by surface collection

The flint (figs. 4-7) - A total of 422 items of humanly-struck flint was recovered comprising 285 flint flakes, 87 more substantial struck chunks, 43 cores and seven retouched pieces including a possible scraper. This is discussed in more detail below.

Prehistoric pottery (fig. 8) - Only two sherds of Iron Age pottery were recovered from the south-eastern corner of the field during surface collection, despite the known presence of cropmark features on the eastern edge of the field (SMR Nos. 8593 and 2995), and the previous discovery of Iron Age sherds in the field immediately to the north (SMR No. 2991).

The Roman pottery (fig. 8) - A small number of Romano-British pottery fragments were recovered (three in total). The numbers are too small to suggest any significant focus for Roman activity within the study area. The sherds comprise wheel-thrown greywares, probably of local production.

Saxon pottery - Despite the proximity of the Anglo-Saxon burgh of Wallingford, no pottery of Saxon date was recovered during surface collection.

The medieval pottery (fig. 8) - Very few sherds of medieval pottery were recovered (4 sherds). The few sherds that were collected appeared to be of mid-late medieval date. Wares of Brill/Boarstall type were notable for their absence.

The post-medieval pottery (fig. 9) - 152 sherds of post-medieval pottery were recovered. No areas of particular concentrations were discernible in the distribution plot and the wide distribution of post-medieval pottery across the site could well be a result of the common practice of manuring in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The ceramic tile (fig. 10) - All the ceramic tile recovered was of post-medieval date (511 fragments). Four of these had remnants of nail holes present. Like the post-medieval pottery, tile distribution is often associated with the practice of manuring, with a denser concentration on the eastern side of the field, nearer to the settlement. The quantity of this material may also possibly be attributed to the demolition of buildings immediately to the north of the field, suggested by the desk-based assessment (CPM 1997).

Slag (fig. 11) - Nine fragments of slag were collected. These were concentrated in the south-eastern corner of the field, in close proximity to one of the cropmarks (SMR No. 2995).

Oyster shell (fig. 12) - seven fragments of oyster shell were recovered. These were concentrated in the south-eastern corner of the field.

Other finds - All the other finds recovered were of post-medieval date and included small quantities of vessel glass (37 fragments), modern window glass (4), clay pipe (35), an iron nail (1), animal bone (9), roofing slate (6) and stone (3).

The finds and archive are currently stored at Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit, prior to arrangements being made for deposition in a suitable museum.

The Flint by Lynne Bevan

The flint was light to mid-grey and brown in colour with the thin, compacted cortex characteristic of pebble flint from secondary deposits. It was difficult to distinguish from the large quantities of natural flint present in the subsoil, from which it might have originated. The condition was generally fairly good for a ploughsoil assemblage, although many pieces had been subsequently plough-shattered and edge damage in some cases precluded the accurate identification of utilisation.

The cores tended to be rough, with little evidence for any form of core preparation. They proved to be difficult to distinguish from the struck chunks, deliberately smashed pebbles. A high incidence of hinge fractures was noted among the resulting broad flakes, suggestive of the use of a hard hammer, such as an abraded core found among the collection which appears to have been re-used as a hammerstone.

The largest concentrations of flint were along the eastern boundary of the triangular-shaped field, particularly towards the south-eastern corner (fig. 4). With the exception of three small concentrations located near the centre of the field, the remainder of the flint was fairly-evenly distributed across the grids, singly or in small groups of up to four pieces. The distribution of flint cores (fig. 5) and retouched pieces (fig. 6) also correlated with the flint concentrations along the eastern field boundary, especially towards the south-eastern corner. The abraded core which appears to have been re-used as a hammerstone was also found close to the south-eastern corner of the field. Only six cores, distributed in five squares towards the northern field boundary, were found outside the main area of flint concentration.

Six of the seven retouched pieces, including a possible scraper with a corticated dorsal made from a barely-modified primary flake, were also found near to the south-eastern field corner, reinforcing the view that this area was the main focus of prehistoric activity. Unfortunately, none of the retouched pieces was datable, being merely flakes or chunks with single retouched edges. However, this form of flintworking in which struck flakes and chunks were apparently selected at random, retouched and used, (or, more commonly, used as unmodified blades), and subsequently discarded, is characteristic of later Bronze Age industries. This has recently been observed at several sites including the Late Bronze Age riverside zone at Runnymede Bridge, Egham, Surrey where a low incidence of formal tools and a high incidence of struck chunks, rather than formal cores, was also observed (Bevan 1996). On a more local level, this collection appears to be contemporary with the two predominantly Late Bronze Age assemblages currently under analysis from Grim's Ditch and the riverside zone at nearby Wallingford (Phillipa Bradley, pers. comm.), and might represent another aspect of later Bronze Age settlement along this part of the Thames.

Discussion

The main area of archaeological interest identified as a result of the surface collection is the distinct concentration of flint across the eastern side of the field, and in particular the south-eastern corner. This concentration includes almost all of the retouched pieces and cores from the assemblage and appears to correspond to the cropmark and geophysical plots previously identified (CPM 1997). One of the ridges of higher ground also occurs in the south-eastern corner, although it is not known to what extent this may be related to the flint concentration. It is clear that the only artefact group showing any significant distribution pattern is the flint. The other categories are either too small (e.g. Prehistoric pottery) or too uniformly distributed (e.g. Post-medieval tile) to be of any significance.

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was carried out by Lucie Dingwall and Annette Hancocks. The provisional identifications of the finds were made by Annette Hancocks, with a specialist contribution from Lynne Bevan. The data analysis and AutoCAD plots were produced by Lucie Dingwall. Figure 1 was prepared by Nigel Dodds and the report was edited by Gwilym Hughes. Thanks are due to Phillipa Bradley of Oxford Archaeological Unit for her comments regarding her work in progress on the Wallingford assemblages.

References

Bevan, L. 1996 *The Later Bronze Age Flintwork from the Riverside Zone at Runnymede Bridge, Egham, Surrey.* Unpublished manuscript for the British Museum.

CPM 1997 *Land at Wallingford, Oxfordshire: An Archaeological Assessment.* CPM Report.

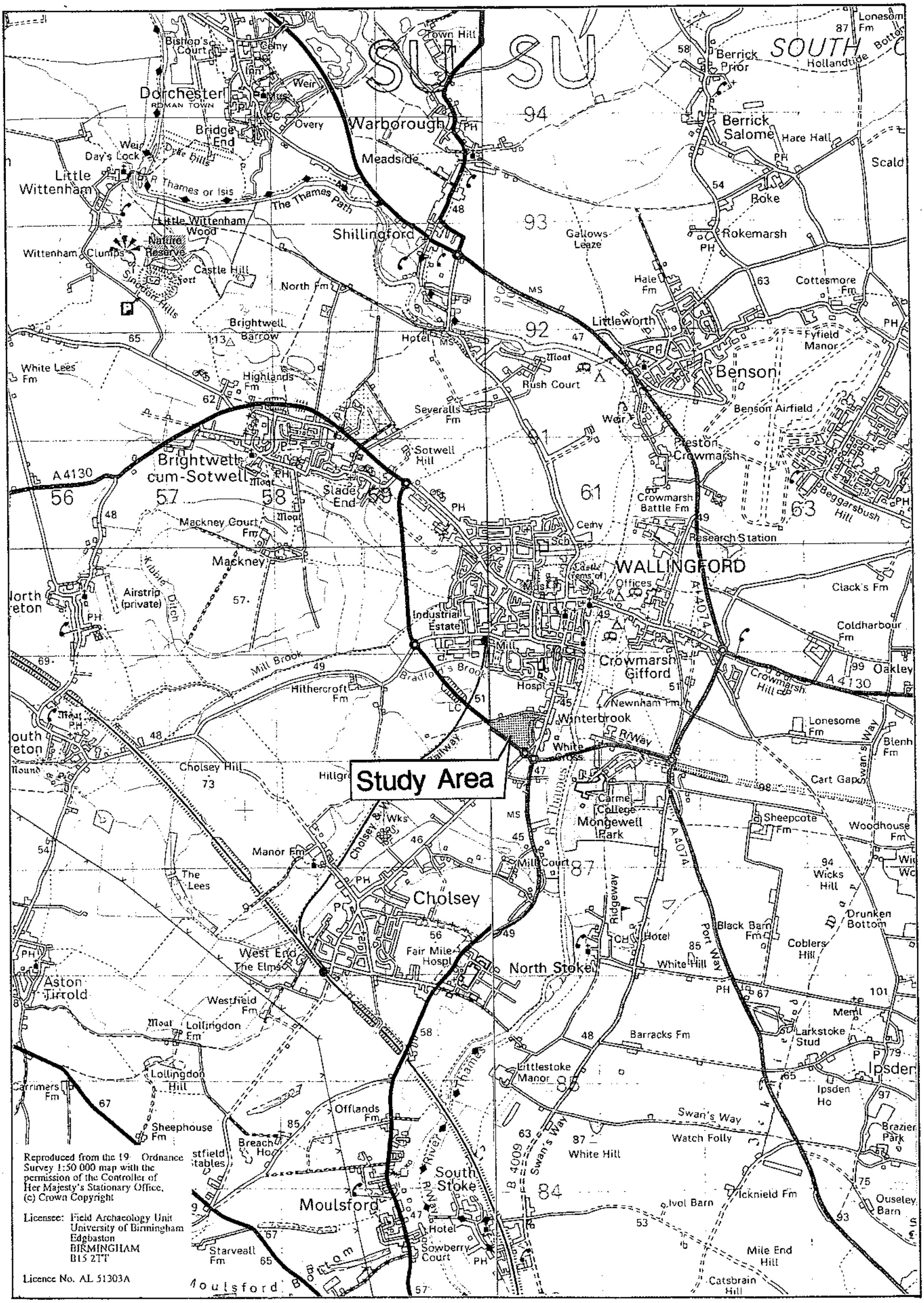
Study Area
Dorchester
ROMAN TOWN
Bishop's Court
Bridge End
Overy
Warborough
Meadside
Day's Lock
Little Wittenham
R Thames or Isis
The Thames Path
Little Wittenham Wood
Nature Reserve
Wittenham Clumps
Castle Hill
Sinodun Hills
Shillingford
North Fm
Brightwell Barrow
White Lees Fm
Highlands Fm
Severalls Fm
Sotwell Hill
Brightwell-cum-Sotwell
A 4130
Slade End
Mackney Court Fm
Mackney
Kibble Ditch
Airstrip (private)
North Moreton
Mill Brook
Bradford's Brook
Hithercroft Fm
Industrial Estate
Cholsey Hill
South Moreton
Manor Fm
The Lees
Cholsey
West End
The Elms
Fair Mile Hospl
Westfield Fm
Lollingdon Fm
Lollingdon Hill
Aston Tirrold
Carrimers Fm
Sheephouse Fm
Offlands Fm
Breach Ho
Moulsford
South Stoke
Sowberry Court
Starveall Fm
Moulsford Bottom
WALLINGFORD
Castle (rems of)
Offices
Crowmarsh Gifford
Newnham Fm
Winterbrook
White Cross
Carmel College
Mongewell Park
Mill Court
Ridgeway
North Stoke
Littlestoke Manor
Swan's Way
White Hill
Watch Folly
Icknield Fm
Ivol Barn
Mile End Hill
Catsbrain Hill
Barracks Fm
Black Barn Fm
White Hill
Port Way
A 4074
B 4009
Research Station
Crowmarsh Battle Fm
Preston Crowmarsh
Benson
Benson Airfield
Beggarsbush Hill
Littleworth
Rush Court
Gallows Leaze
Hale Fm
Rokemarsh
Roke
Berrick Salome
Hare Hall
Berrick Prior
Hollandtide Bottom
SOUTH
Scald
Cottesmore Fm
Fyfield Manor
Clack's Fm
Coldharbour Fm
Crowmarsh Hill
Oakley
Lonesome Fm
Cart Gap
Sheepcote Fm
Woodhouse Fm
Wicks Hill
Drunken Bottom
Coblers Hill
Larkstoke Stud
Ipsden
Ipsden Ho
Braziers Park
Ouseley Barn
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Fig.1

Winterbrook, Wallingford, 1998 - Fieldwalking

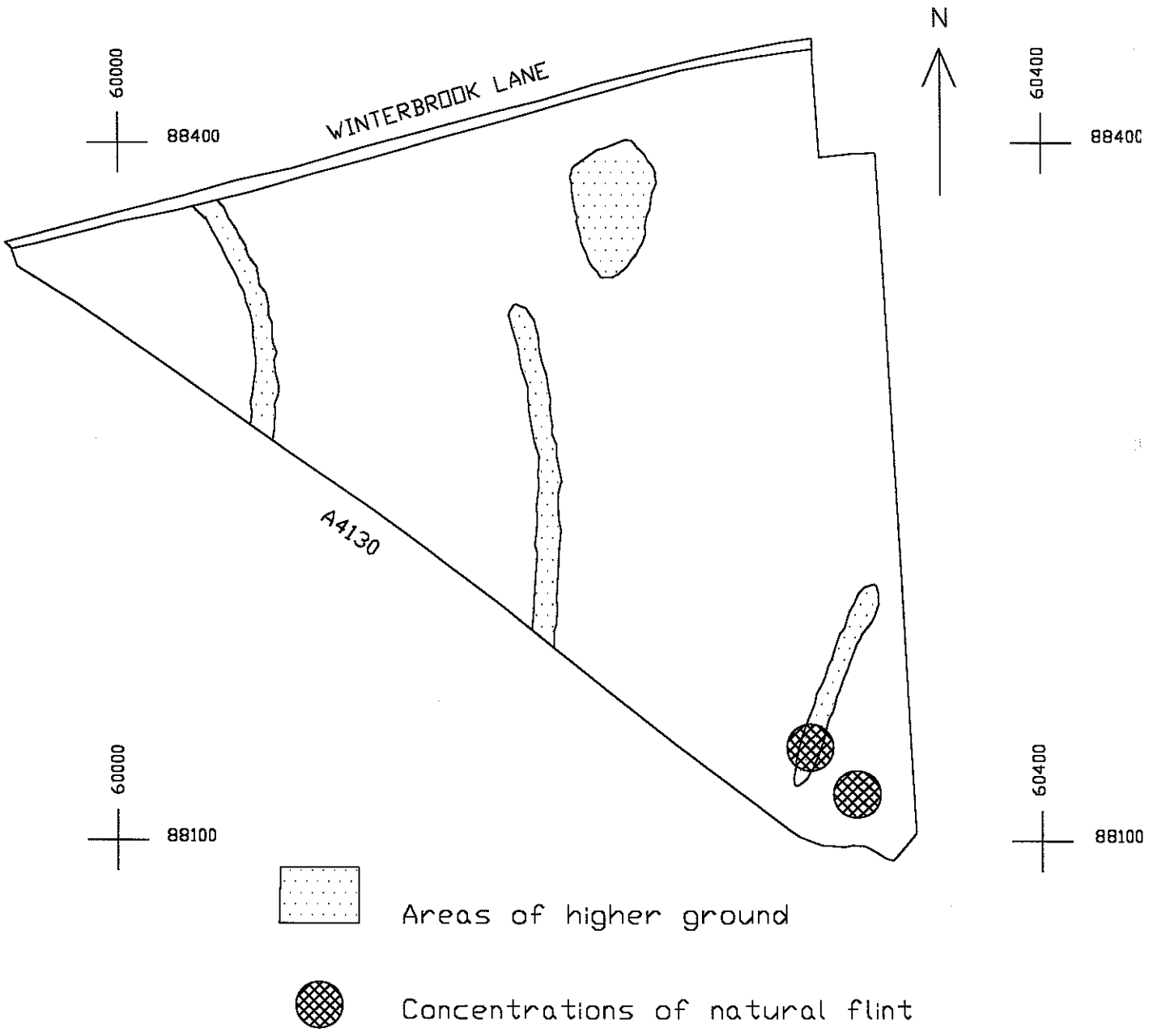

Fig.2

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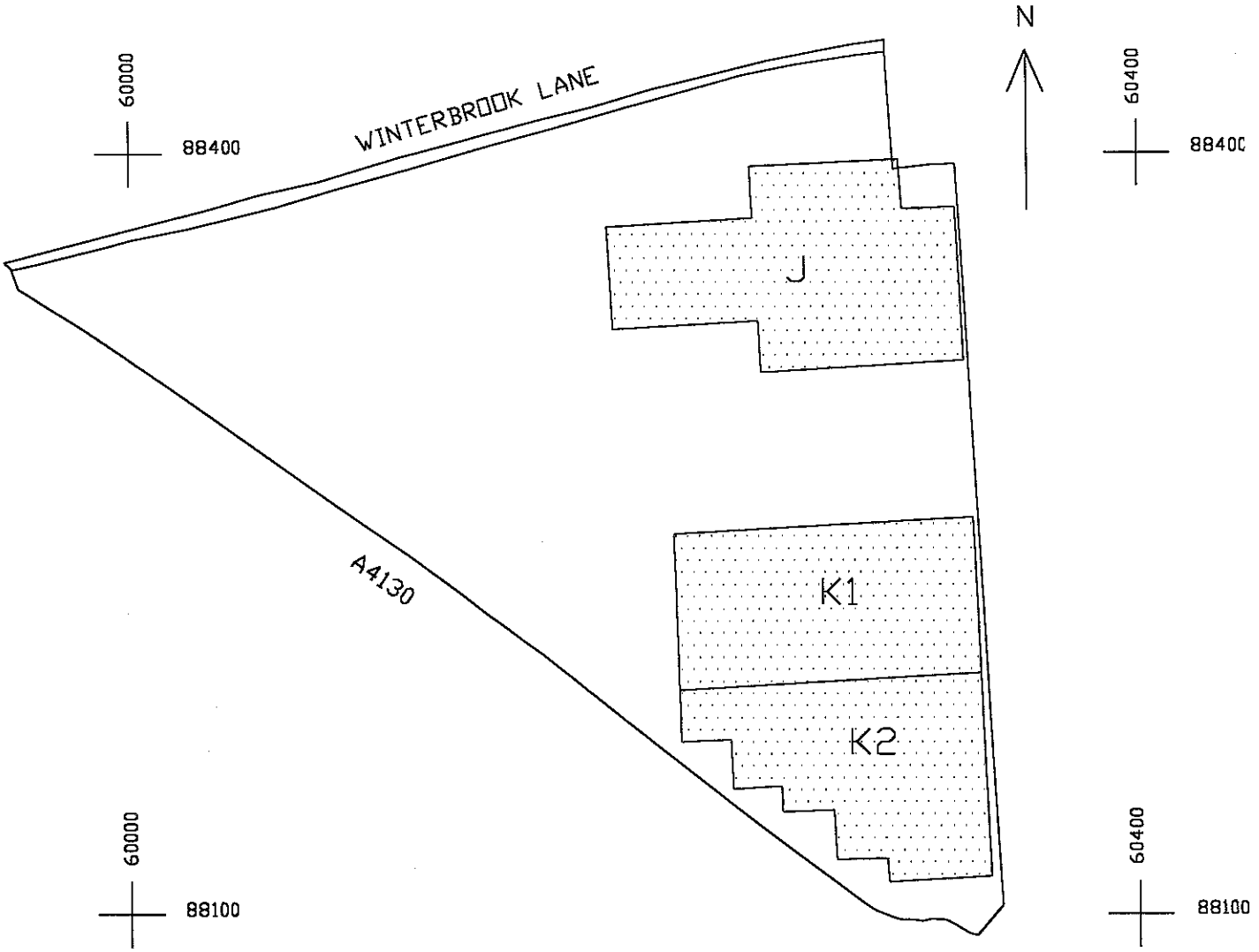

GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY AREAS

Fig.3

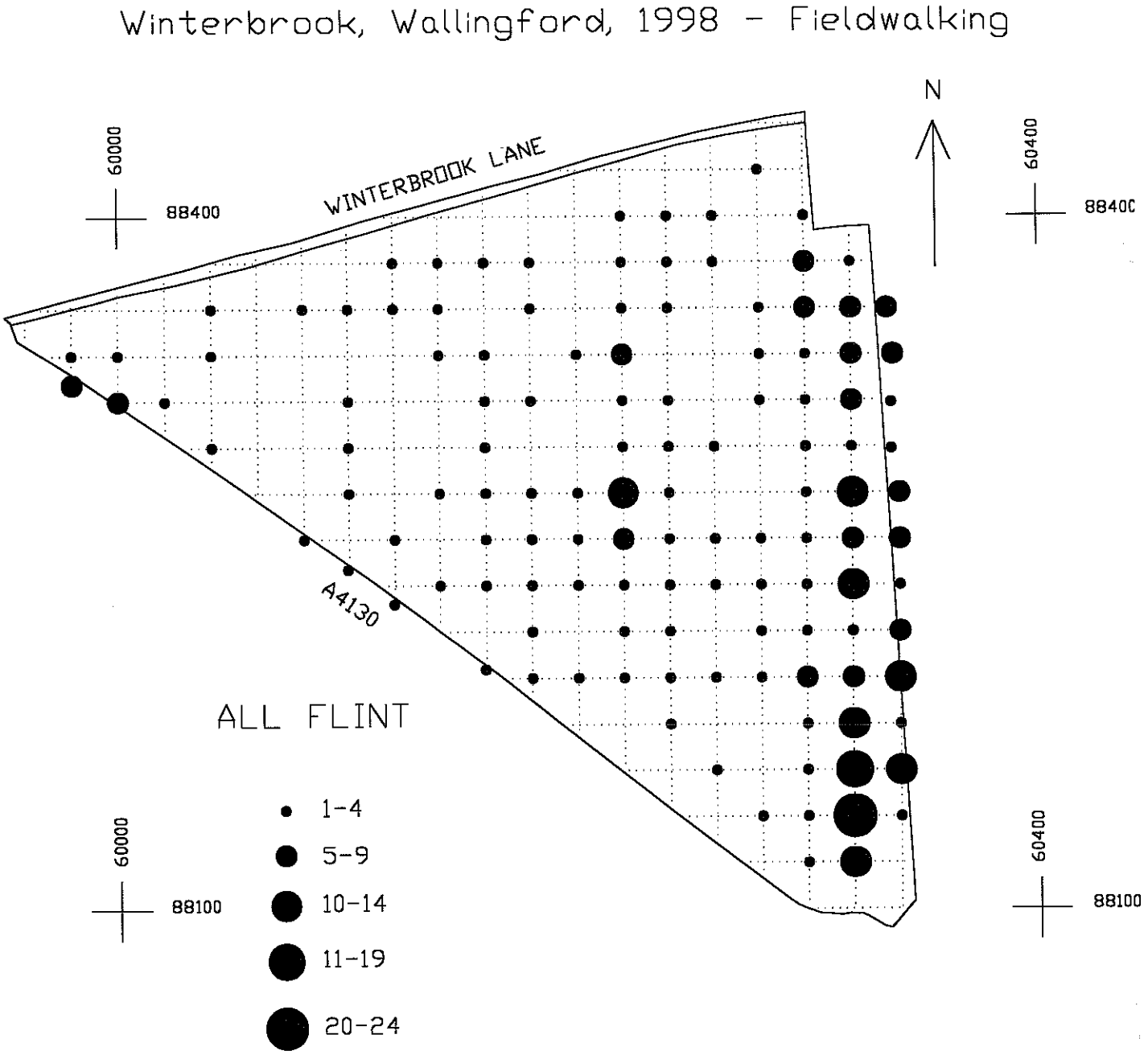
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Fig.4

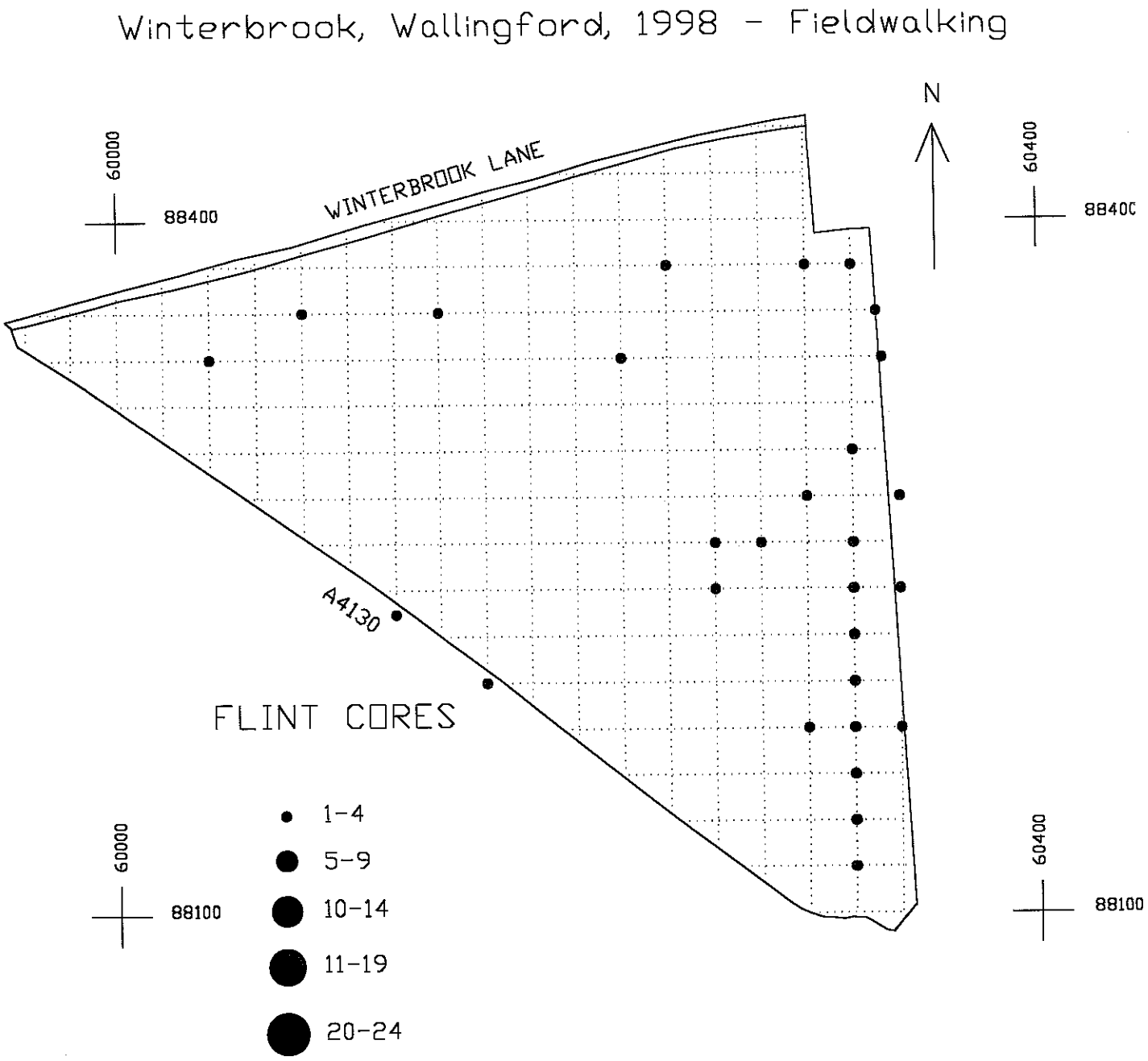
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Fig.5

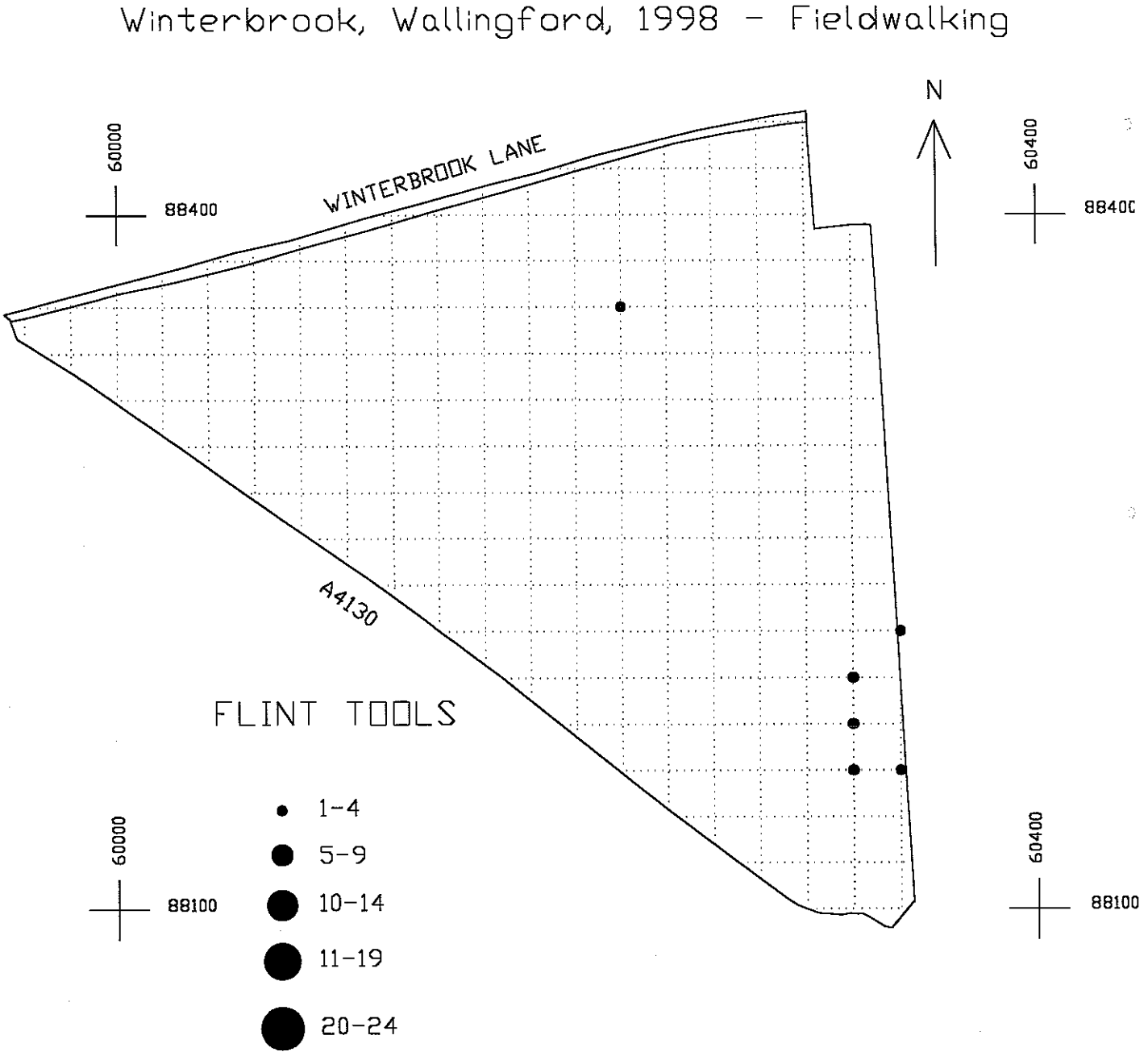
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Fig.6

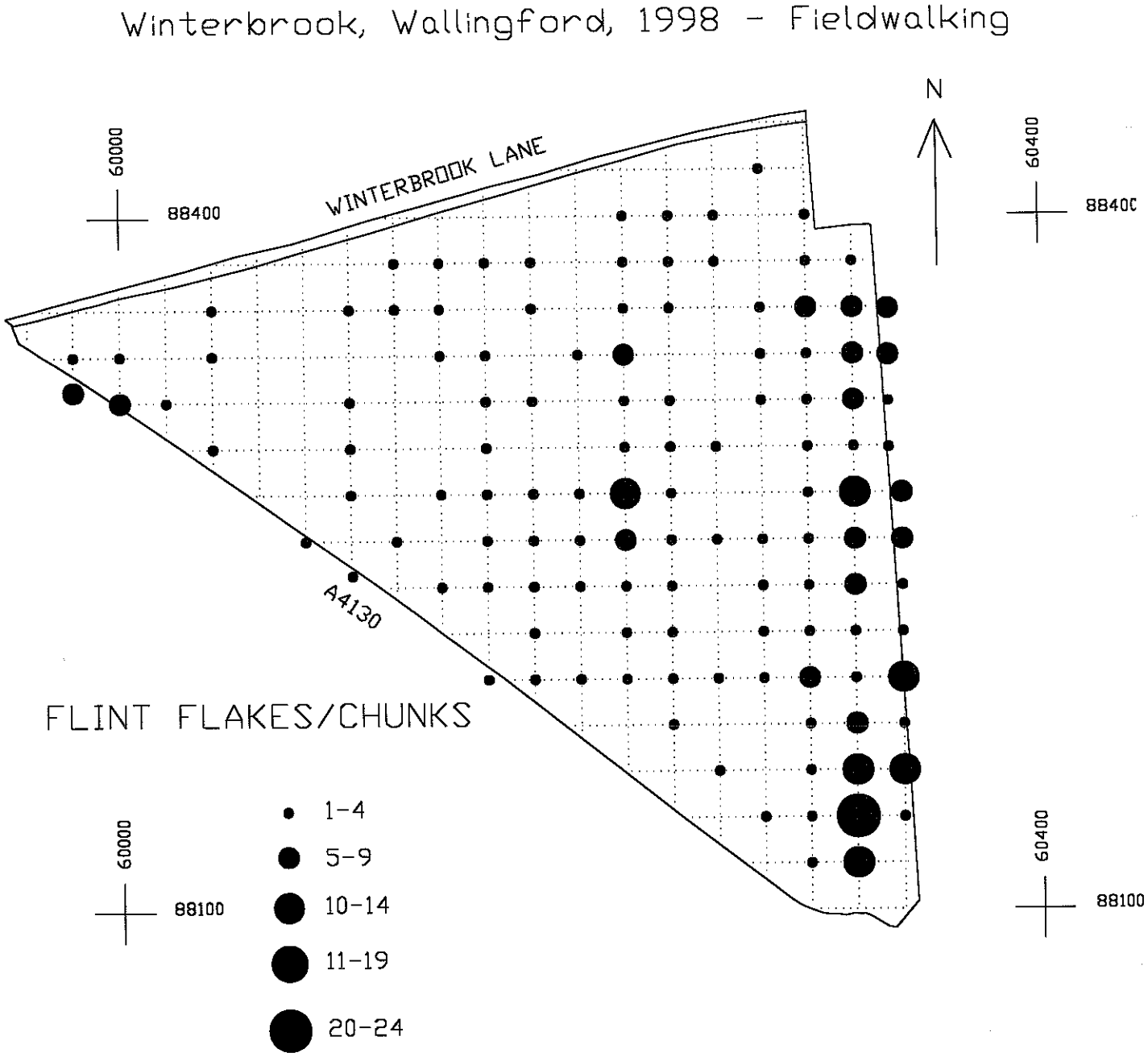
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Fig.7

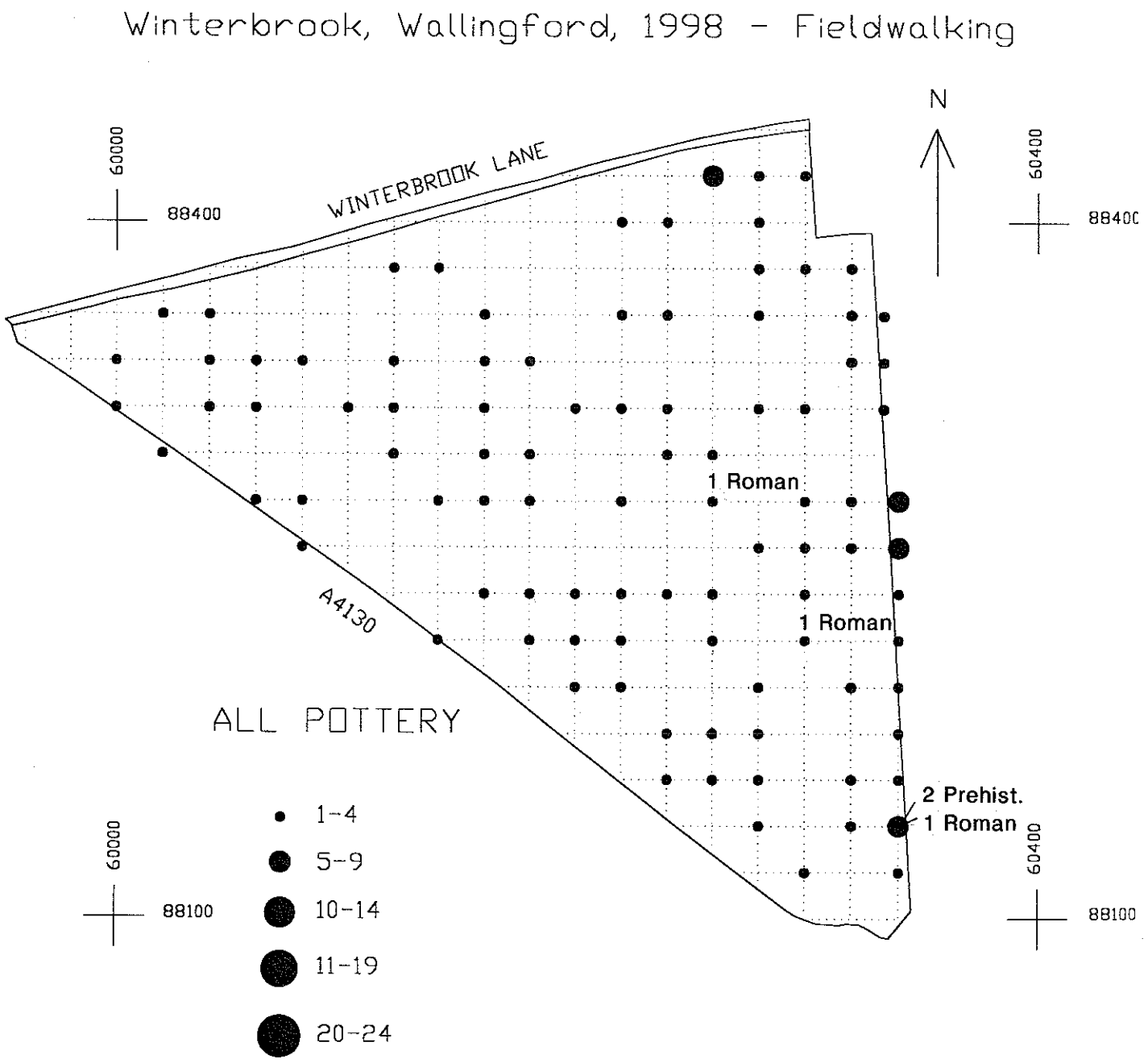
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Fig.8

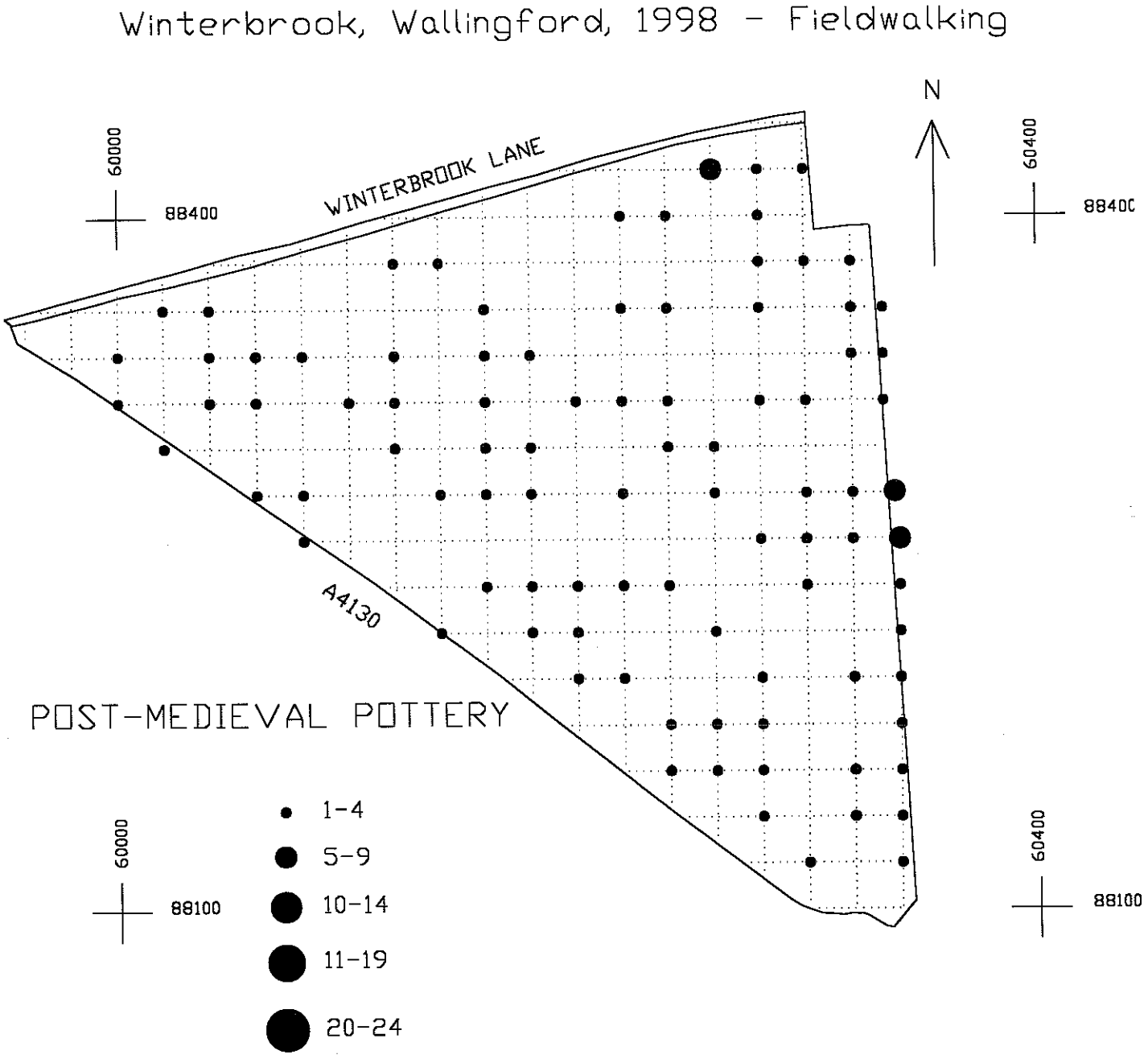
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Fig.9

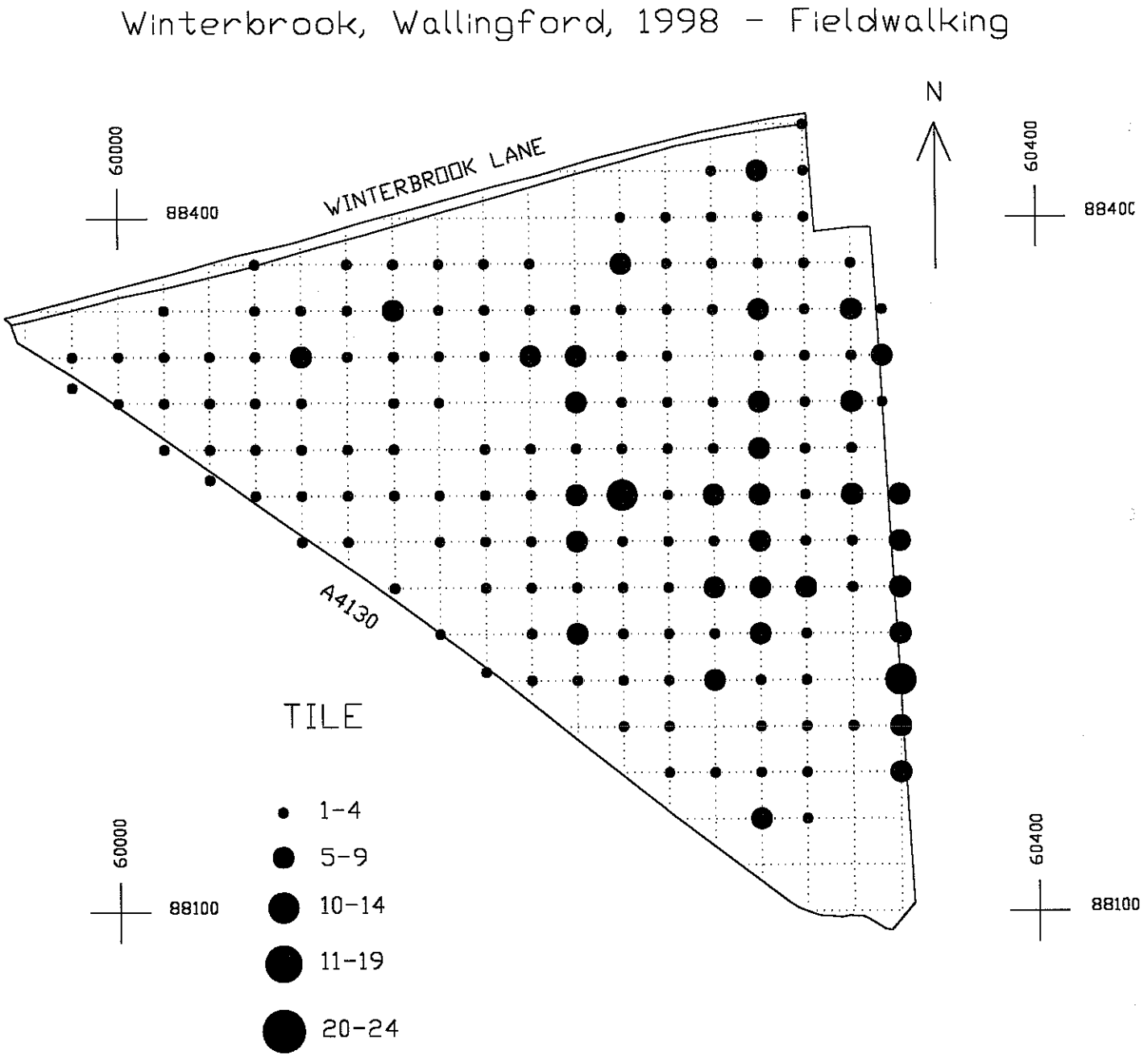
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Fig.10

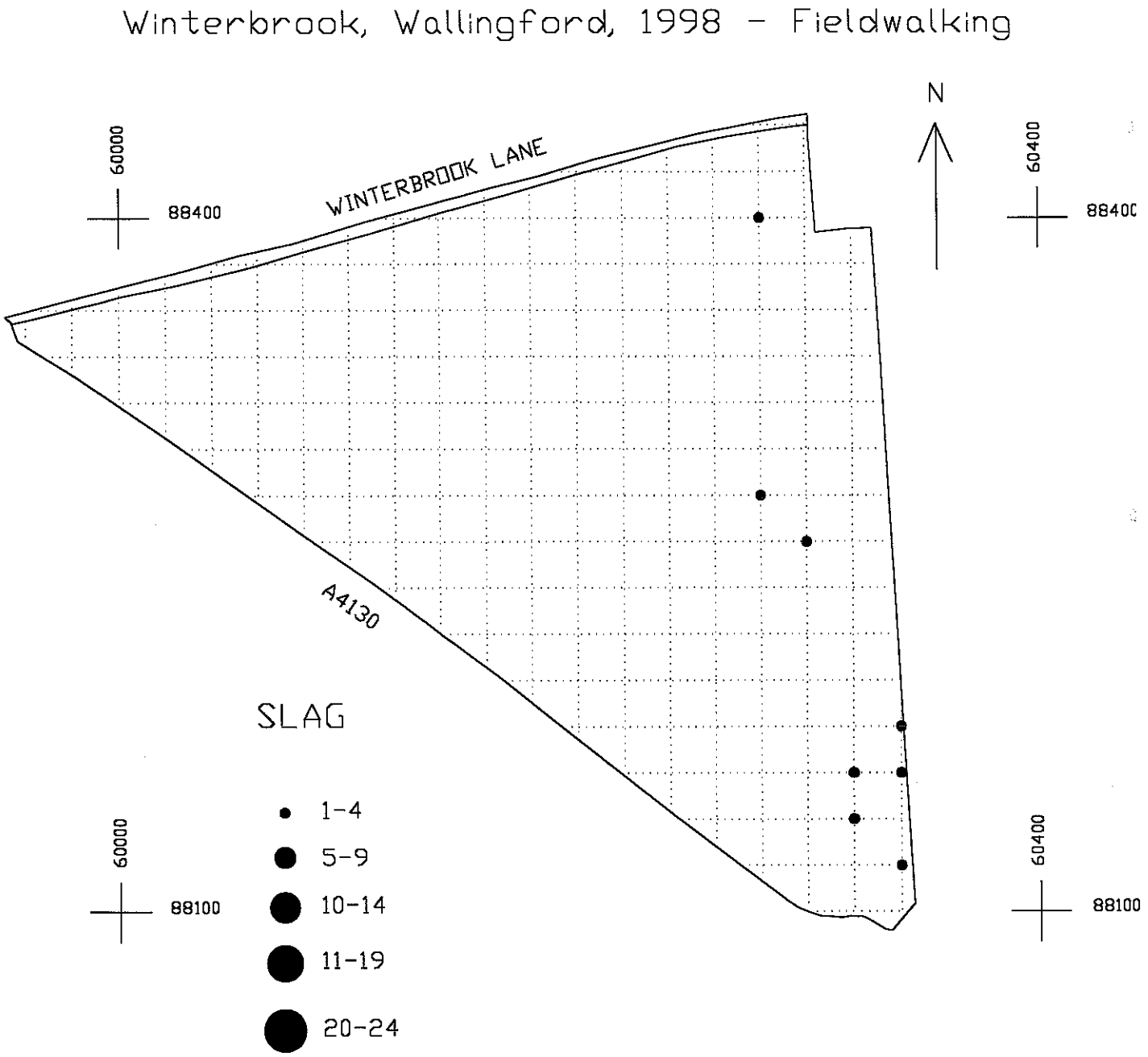
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Fig.11

Winterbrook, Wallingford, 1998 - Fieldwalking

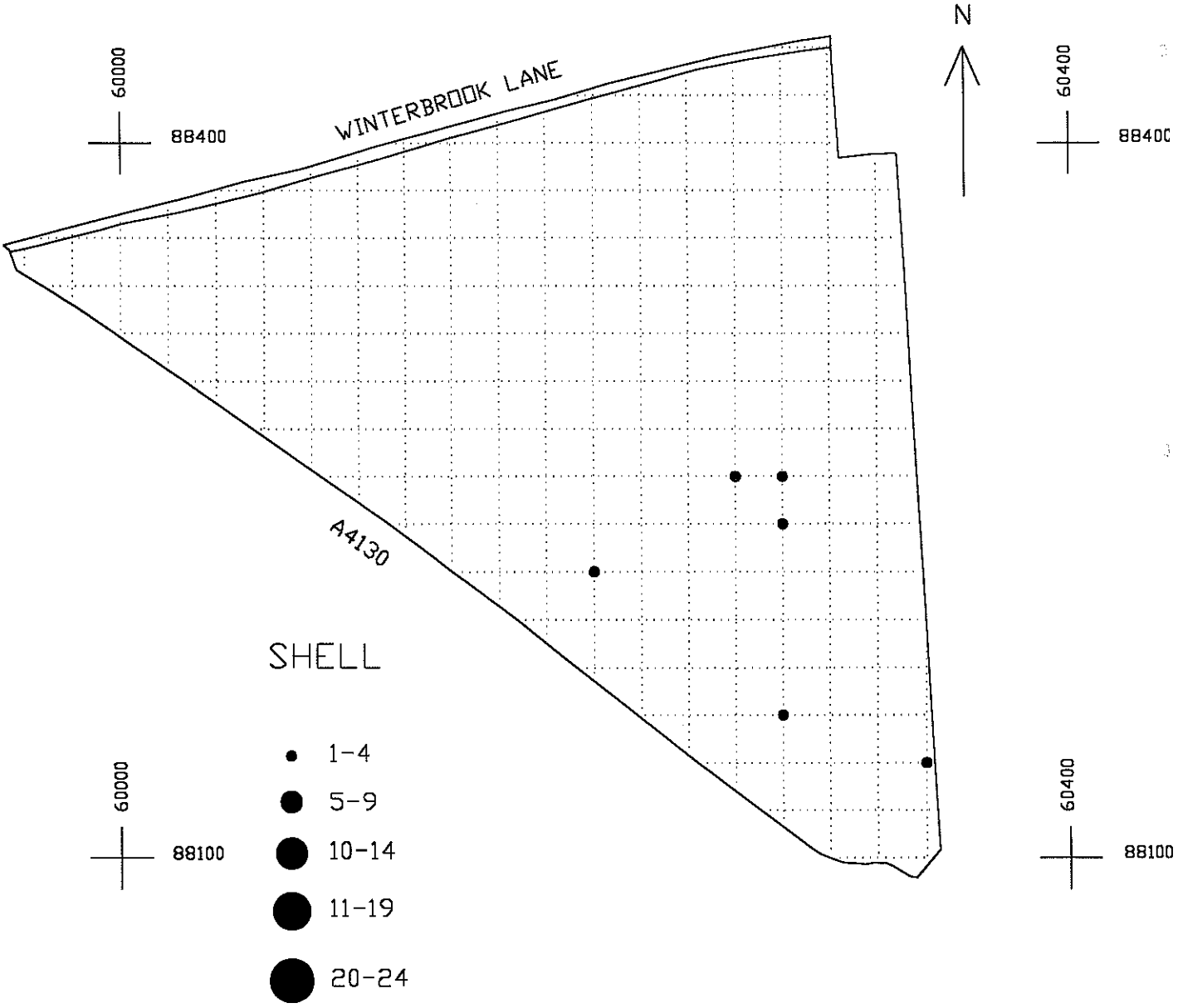

Fig.12