

Report on an Archaeological Field-Walking Survey at Angle Farm September, October, November 2015

Soham, Cambridgeshire



Report prepared by Archaeology Cambridgeshire East
April 2018





Report No 0001/CMC
Site Name Field Walking at Angle Farm, Great Drove, Soham
HER Event No ECB4992
OASIS ID archaeol33-314081
Date of Works September to November 2015
Grid Reference TL579725 Nearest Post Code CB7 5HX
Site Code SOHAF15
Receiving Body Soham Museum
Accession No TBA

Prepared By Cathy Cantrell
Position ACE Group Member
Date 11 April 2018

Checked By Donna Martin
Position ACE Group Member
Date 20 April 2018

Signed

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Archaeology Cambridgeshire East
Cathy Cantrell
c/o Soham Museum
7 Churchgate Street, Soham, Cambridgeshire, CB7 5BJ

t:
e: museum@soham.org.uk
w: www.sohammuseum.co.uk



SUMMARY

Between 6 September and 29 November 2015 Archaeology Cambridgeshire East undertook an archaeological survey by field walking across 4 out of 6 fields, of a 34 hectare site at Angle Farm south west of Soham in the drained Soham Mere. Finds included medieval and modern pottery in two of the fields and in every field ballast stones not natural to the Soham area. Worked flints were found in three of the four fields – some of the best examples will be added to the Soham Museum handling collection.

Time was limited as planning permission for a Solar Park on this site was expected to be confirmed by January 2016. Seven field walking days were achieved before the area became waterlogged and too dangerous to continue.



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 At the request of the new tenant, an archaeological field walking survey was conducted on fields south of Angle Farm, Great Drove, Soham, grid reference TL579725 by Cambridgeshire Archaeology East (ACE) between 9 September and 29 November 2015. **Fig 1: Location of Field Walking Survey**
- 1.1.2 The work was carried out by members of ACE which is a Community Archaeology Group affiliated to the Jigsaw Project hosted by Oxford Archaeology East.
- 1.1.3 The land had been previously evaluated by Oxford Archaeology East, Report 1652, in August 2014 (OASIS No: *oxfordar3-187914*). No artefacts of any description had been recovered.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The field walking site had been harvested but not ploughed in. Traversing the site was often difficult as the top level was sticky and weighty and became waterlogged even after modest levels of rainfall. It was noted that as the sun broke thru any fog, the ground and vegetation could be heard drying out – a quiet background low crackling noise. **Plate 1: Field 5 - Waterlogged**
- 1.2.2 The underlying geology was of Gault Formation – Mudstone. Sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 101 to 113 million years ago in the Cretaceous Period. Local environment previously dominated by shallow seas. These sedimentary rocks are shallow-marine in origin. They are detrital, ranging from coarse- to fine-grained (locally with some carbonate content) forming interbedded sequences.
(<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>)
- 1.2.3 The area being field walked varied between +10 feet above sea level and -7ft below sea level. Low lying areas quickly turned to ponds following rain.
Fig 2: Topographical Map of the Area
(<http://en-gb.topographic-map.com/places/Cambridgeshire-92136/>)

1.3 Archaeological background

- 1.3.1 There is evidence of settlement within the parish of Soham from the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic periods. Large numbers of hand axes and other implements have been found by farming folk, although the location in most cases is not recorded.
(JJ Wymer 1983 Palaeolithic Sites of East Anglia)
- 1.3.2 A Neolithic polished stone axe was found on clay underlying peat at the north end of Soham Cotes.
(Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record 07065)
- 1.3.3 There is also evidence of human activity in the Soham area since the Bronze Age. The parish has yielded bronze weapons and tools, and some pottery Late Iron Age and early Roman pottery was found circa 1980 south-east of the town, with three (destroyed) ring-ditches. Pottery and tesserae have been recovered from a probable Roman dwelling south of the town.
- 1.3.4 On the Soham Mere shelf, at Bracks Farm, approximately 500m to the south of Angle Farm a 4-flanged Bronze Age golden torc was found in an arable field (MCB8549), perhaps suggesting either the ritual deposition of metalwork as per other Bronze Age sites, for example Flag Fen, Fengate and Must Farm.
(Oxford Archaeology East, Report 1652, in August 2014 (OASIS No: oxfordar3-187914)
- 1.3.5 Ballast stones have commonly been found in the Mere basin. These round pebble like stones are very heavy and are not natural to Cambridgeshire. It is thought that they provided weight to stabilise Bronze Age vessels, such as coracles and log boats, in the water. The stones come from Lincolnshire and even further north and suggest that our Bronze Age ancestors knew about navigation and travelled by water for great distances outside of their local area.
- 1.3.6 Soham was certainly inhabited in Anglo Saxon times, its people being buried in three separate cemeteries. One, on the site of the modern churchyard, has produced cruciform brooches, perhaps mid-6th-century with a second at Soham Water Tower. The third which lay partly within the modern burial ground off the Fordham Road, was excavated in 2016 prior to building on the site and revealed 55 graves, several with high quality grave goods.
- 1.3.7 The current parish church of St Andrews (late 12th century) is thought to be the most likely location of the Monastery established by St Felix in 630AD. The Monastery was destroyed by the Vikings in 870AD and never rebuilt, although William of Malmesbury records that a Cathedral and Palace was established in Soham circa 900AD by Lutlingus, a Saxon nobleman.
(By Mere and Fen: A History of Soham, William Franklin p.80)

1.4 Historical Background – Soham Mere

Notes taken from “Waterways of Soham and its Surroundings” by Janet Metcalfe (Ref. Soham Museum, Soham Local and Family History Group, Soham Journal Vol. 1 (2014))

- 1.4.1 Soham stands on a peninsula which runs between Stuntney and Fordham. It is today bounded on all sides by a plain of low lying highly productive agricultural land. The western section is the dried out area of Soham Mere, east of which runs Soham Lode. The interconnecting ancient waterways provided in some cases the only form of transportation between Soham and the surrounding area including to Ely and later determined the current Parish boundaries between Soham and Fordham, and Soham and Wicken.
- 1.4.2 The River Snail, rises at Snailwell to the north of Newmarket, but at Moor Farm it turns sharply west becoming Soham Lode. Encased in high banks the Lode crosses Wet Horse Fen, skirts East Fen Common and enters the town at Brook Dam, a known ancient crossing. This diversion at Moor Farm may have been an early attempt to drain the moor, taking into account the Roman settlement and Bronze Age finds nearby.
- 1.4.3 Within the town, the river flows between closes and along a canalised section to the bridge near The Ship public house. Because it cuts the higher ground, the channel must have been dug specifically to allow water to pass into Angle Common and into the Mere. Dates for this are unknown, but could tie in with the early Moor Farm diversion. The river drops by some two or three metres within the cut, via a weir before it reaches Angle Common.
- 1.4.4 The weir is the site of all identifiable former mills over the centuries with the final one being demolished in the latter years of the twentieth century. **Fig: 5 Sketch of Watercourses Surrounding Soham Mere**
- 1.4.5 After Angle Common, the waters of the Snail may have been subject to changes in direction at different dates. Once the cut had allowed the water to flow west, it probably flowed directly into Soham Mere, maintaining its levels and so ensuring its plentiful supply of fish and fowl, sedge for building and peat for fuel, throughout the Medieval period.
- 1.4.6 At the northern end of the Mere, Henney Drain may have provided access via Harrimere Drain, to the Great Ouse navigation system. Waterborne goods could be brought to and from Soham’s “hythes” (docks or ports) across the Mere. However, it is debatable whether goods could be shipped in directly from the Ouse, although a waterway is shown on both Vermuyden’s map of 1642, and on Jonas Moore’s map of The Fens of 1684.
- 1.4.7 The Twelve Foot Drain may have provided protection from winter flooding by diverting the waters of the Snail. It had encircled the south and west of the Mere since Medieval times, primarily as a catch-water drain and forms the parish boundary between Wicken and Soham.
- 1.4.8 Gradually, the edges of the Mere were encroached upon. By the early 1600s, much of the dried out northern and eastern shoreline had been taken in - by 1656 it was largely described as “The Waste”.
- 1.4.9 Draining the Mere began in earnest in the mid 1600’s when Thomas Chicheley, the then Lord of the Manor took control of the entire area. Wind pumps were used but these were ineffectual as it flooded again and a period of seasonal flood and summer time pasture ensued until the 1750s.



-
- 1.4.10 It was not until the arrival of the steam driven pump, advocated by John Rennie in the early 1820s, that the Mere was finally and reliably drained and the reclaimed land used for arable farming. Today, the dried out Mere relies on electrically driven pumps in the care of the Internal Drainage Board to maintain its dry state.

1.5 Acknowledgements

- 1.5.1 ACE thanks the incoming Tenant Farmer for inviting us to carry out a field walking survey on his land.
- 1.5.2 Thanks to Janet Metcalfe and Bill Franklin of ACE for the use of their published works relating to Soham, it's Mere and surrounding waterways, to create the overview in this document.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To determine whether this area was permanently settled, seasonally settled at some point in the past, or remained uninhabited.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 In the first instance, the site was assessed and a risk assessment prepared noting hazards (signed copies have been retained for insurance purposes). Particular attention was paid to weather forecasts as this area can become covered in dense fog at speed.
- 2.2.2 A preliminary scoping survey was carried out pre the first field walking session – a medium sized worked flint, potential core with additional working, was found. **See Plate 6: Field 2**
- 2.2.3 Sessions were conducted in the fields and in the direction as per the table below. A map showing details is at **Fig: 3 Areas Field Walked**
- 2.2.4 Field 2 - where the original scoping exercise took place – was not available at the time it was reached in sequence, and later was too wet to access safely.

Date	Field	Width	Direction
06/09/2015	1	1 metre	North to South
20/09/2015	1	1 metre	North to South
20/09/2015	6	Informal	West to East
04/10/2015	4	2 metres	West to East
18/10/2015	4	2 metres	West to East
01/11/2015	4	2 metres	North to South
15/11/2015	5	2 metres	West to East
29/11/2015	5	2 metres	West to East

Note: There was a change of direction in the final session in Field 4 in an attempt to reach land previously untouched by the OAE evaluation trenches which are shown in **Fig 4: Oxford Archaeology East Evaluation Trenches**

- 2.2.5 Each session was attended by between 4 and 8 ACE group members. Apart from the first 2 sessions all row widths were 2 metres as per the table shown above.
- 2.2.6 Finds were reviewed at the end of each row and bagged up for washing and processing.



3 FINDS REPORT

3.1 Summary

3.1.1 Finds by field and further split by day reveal a large number of finds, primarily flint, common building materials and ballast stones. The ballast stones were not of a type found naturally in the area. Note: Scoping Field Walk flint from Field 2 is not included in matrix below.

Date	06/09/2015	20/09/2015	04/10/2015	18/10/2015	01/11/2015	15/11/2015	29/11/2015	Total
Field No	1	1	4	4	4	5	5	
Flint	6	7	17	13	14	9	7	73
Bone	0	0	5	4	0	3	1	13
Fossil	12	6	5	12	10	3	10	58
Pottery	0	0	7	6	5	10	8	36
Wood or Charcoal	2	0	18	22	1	2	3	48
Ballast	8	9	14	25	34	26	33	149
Metal	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	5
CBM	3	3	38	31	48	41	62	226
Glass	0	1	1	2	0	7	0	11
Quartz	0	0	1	12	14	3	23	53
Burnt	0	0	3	2	0	3	7	15
Land Drain	3	0	1	3	12	7	5	31
Clay Pipe	1	0	0	2	0	3	1	7
Slate or Tile	1	3	2	5	0	0	2	13
Other	5	4	7	10	13	0	0	39

3.1.2 On Day 5 in Field 4 (1 November 2015) the direction of the field walking was changed from East West to North South to cover as much ground as possible that may have lain undisturbed by the OAE evaluation trenches or spoil heaps. A 10m tranche was covered over a 375m stretch, covering approximately 0.75ha. **See Figs 3 & 4**

3.1.3 Ballast stones were found in all areas field walked. **Plate 11: Ballast Stones**

3.1.4 Category "Other" was mainly composed of examples of stone types - limestone, gritstone, granite, marble, sandstone - plus several examples of shell.

3.1.5 Details and analysis charts are shown at **Appendix B**

3.1.6 A selection of Finds from each of the Fields is shown in **Plates 5 - 11**

3.1.7 Finds of interest will be passed to Soham Museum or added to the ACE Handling Collection. Items not to be retained will be deposited safely at a location near to Middle Drove, Soham - NGR TL57780 73649.



4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Conclusion

The Aims of the Field Walking Survey had been met in full.

4.2 Significance

- 4.2.1 A concentration of worked flints was noted in Field 4 (44 items), with proportionally less against the land walked in Field 5 (16) and Field 1 (13) plus the scoping in Field 2 (2). This suggests the land was in use in prehistoric times but the lack of animal bone is likely to indicate that it was not settled on a permanent or seasonal basis.
- 4.2.2 A single potential bronze age sherd was found in Field 5 **Plate 10**
- 4.2.3 Common building materials were concentrated in fields 4 (117) and Field 5 (103) which were considered to be post medieval or more modern, suggesting that there had been settlement after the Mere was reliably drained in the 1820's.
- 4.2.4 The large number of ballast stones recovered was in line with the locally held theory that waterborne vessels, likely to be coracles or log boats, were travelling as far as the south bank of the Mere. **Plate 11: Ballast Stones**

4.3 Recommendations

- 4.3.1 At the time of writing up (April 2018) this report can confirm that the work to install the solar farm has been completed. The area of Angle Farm in question is predicted to be out of bounds for at least 30 years.



APPENDIX A: BIBLIOGRAPHY

British Geological Survey, Geology Viewer of Great Britain
<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>

Topographic.map.com
<http://en-gb.topographic-map.com/places/Cambridgeshire-92136/>

JJ Wymer 1983 Palaeolithic Sites of East Anglia

Oxford Archaeology East, Report 1652, in August 2014 (OASIS No: oxfordar3-187914)

Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record 07065

By Mere and Fen: A History of Soham by William Franklin

Notes taken from Waterways of Soham and its Surroundings by Janet Metcalfe (Ref. Soham Museum, Soham Local and Family History Group, Soham Journal Vol. 1 (2014))



APPENDIX B: FINDS

B1: Totals by Field and Type

FINDS SUMMARY - FIELD WALKING ANGLE FARM - SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER 2015

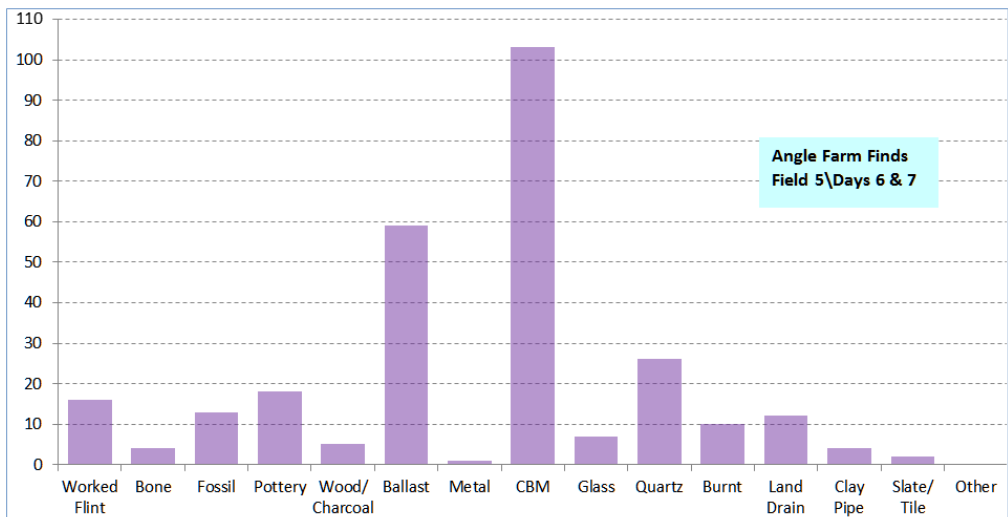
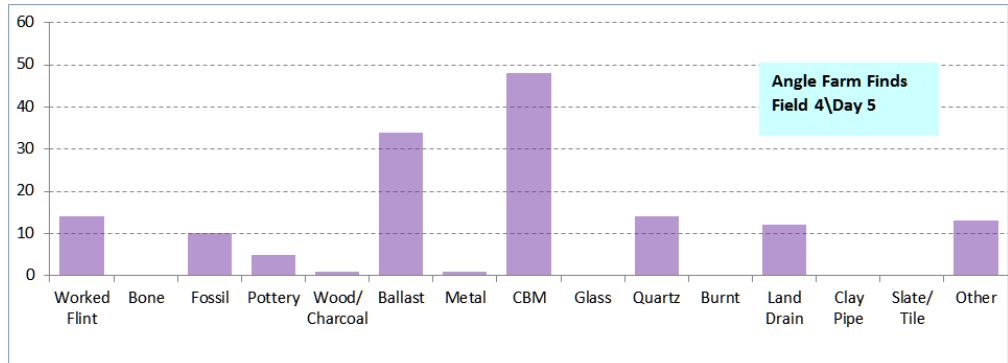
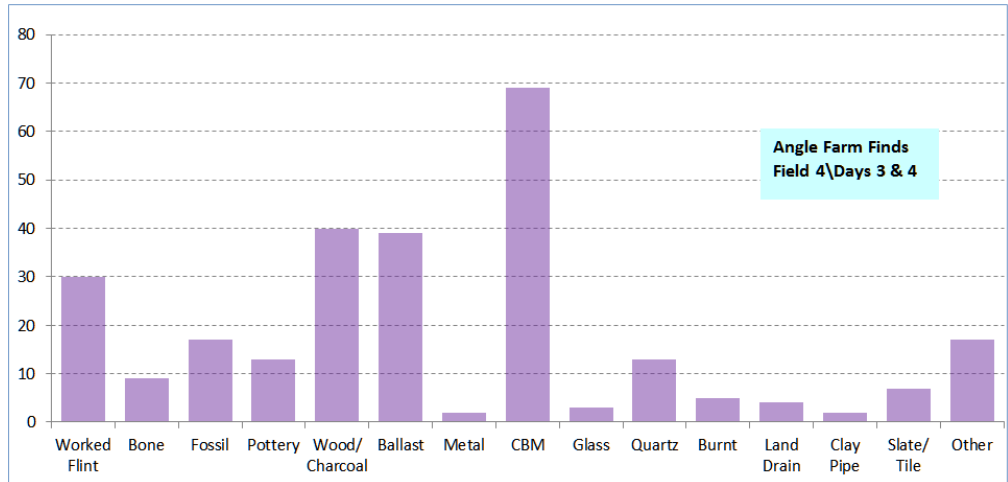
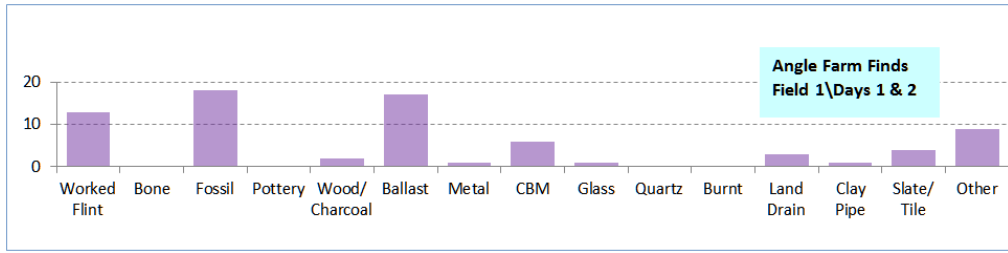
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Field No	Date	Worked Flint	Bone	Fossil	Pottery	Wood/ Charcoal	Ballast	Metal	CBM	Glass	Quartz	Burnt	Land Drain	Clay Pipe	Slate/ Tile	Other
1	06/09/2015	6	0	12	0	2	8	1	3	0	0	0	3	1	1	5
1	20/09/2015	7	0	6	0	0	9	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	3	4
Field 1 Total		13	0	18	0	2	17	1	6	1	0	0	3	1	4	9
4	04/10/2015	17	5	5	7	18	14	1	38	1	1	3	1	0	2	7
4	18/10/2015	13	4	12	6	22	25	1	31	2	12	2	3	2	5	10
4	01/11/2015	14	0	10	5	1	34	1	48	0	14	0	12	0	0	13
Field 4 Total		44	9	27	18	41	73	3	117	3	27	5	16	2	7	30
5	15/11/2015	9	3	3	10	2	26	1	41	7	3	3	7	3	0	0
5	29/11/2015	7	1	10	8	3	33	0	62	0	23	7	5	1	2	0
Field 5 Total		16	4	13	18	5	59	1	103	7	26	10	12	4	2	0
Finds Total		73	13	58	36	48	149	5	226	11	53	15	31	7	13	39

Note: Other was mainly composed of examples of stone types - limestone, gritstone, granite, marble, sandstone - plus several examples of shell.



B2: Finds Comparison Fields by Type





APPENDIX C: OASIS REPORT FORM

OASIS ID: archaeol33-314081

? Project details

Add or edit entries

Project name	Field Walking at Angle Farm, Soham, Cambridgeshire
Short description of the project	Between 6 September and 29 November 2015 Archaeology Cambridgeshire East undertook an archaeological survey by field walking across 4 out of 6 fields, of a 34 hectare site at Angle Farm south west of Soham in the drained Soham Mere. Finds included medieval and modern pottery in two of the fields and in every field ballast stones not natural to the Soham area. Worked flints were found in three of the four fields - some of the best examples will be added to the Soham Museum handling collection.
Project dates	Start: 06-09-2015 End: 29-11-2015
Previous/future work	Yes / No
Any associated project reference codes	ECB4992 - HER event no.
Any associated project reference codes	SOHAF15 - Sitecode
Type of project	Research project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Cultivated Land 2 - Operations to a depth less than 0.25m
Monument type	BURIED LAND SURFACE Medieval
Monument type	BURIED LAND SURFACE Bronze Age
Significant Finds	SHERD Post Medieval
Significant Finds	FLINT Uncertain
Investigation type	'Systematic Field Walking'
Prompt	Research

? Project location

Add or edit entries

Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE SOHAM Angle Farm, Soham, Cambridgeshire
Postcode	CB7 5HX
Study area	34 Hectares
Site coordinates	NGR - TL 5778 7254 LL - 52.327876 0.31568842 (decimal) LL - 52 19 40 N 000 18 56 E (degrees) Point

? Project creators

Add or edit entries



Name of Organisation Archaeology Cambridgeshire East
Project brief originator Group Member
Project design originator Mrs Donna Martin
Project director/manager Mrs Donna Martin
Project supervisor Mrs Donna Martin
Type of sponsor/funding body Local Arch. Society/Amateur Archaeologist
Name of sponsor/funding body Soham Museum Group

[?](#) **Project archives**

Add or edit entries

Physical Archive recipient Soham Museum
Physical Archive ID SOHAF15
Physical Contents "Ceramics","Glass","Worked bone","Worked stone/lithics"
Physical Archive notes Any items of interest will be passed to Soham Museum or added to the ACE Handling Collection. Items not to be retained will be disposed of in a pit which will have GPS readings recorded
Digital Archive recipient Soham Museum
Digital Archive ID SOHAF15
Digital Contents "Ceramics","Glass","Worked bone","Worked stone/lithics"
Digital Media available "Spreadsheets","Survey"
Digital Archive notes Any items of interest will be passed to Soham Museum or added to the ACE Handling Collection. Items not to be retained will be disposed of in a pit which will have GPS readings recorded
Paper Archive recipient Soham Museum
Paper Archive ID SOHAF15
Paper Contents "Worked stone/lithics","Ceramics","Glass","Worked bone"
Paper Media available "Aerial Photograph","Drawing","Map","Plan","Report","Survey "
Paper Archive notes Any items of interest will be passed to Soham Museum or added to the ACE Handling Collection. Items not to be retained will be disposed of in a pit which will have GPS readings recorded

Status **Incomplete**

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig 1: Location of Field Walking Survey – OS Maps

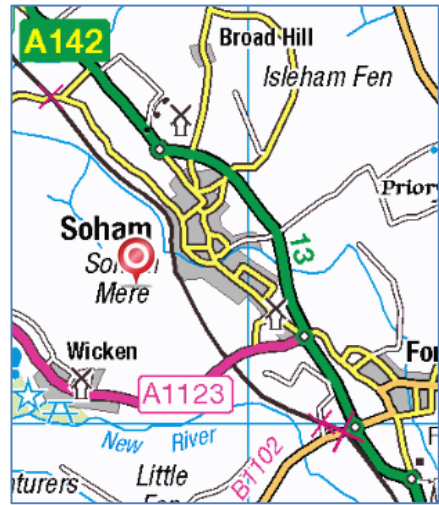
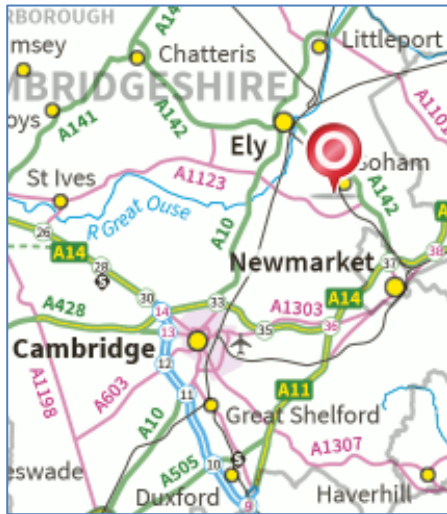


Fig 2: Topographical Map of the Area

<http://en-gb.topographic-map.com/places/Cambridgeshire-92136/>

Field locations outlined by current drainage ditches

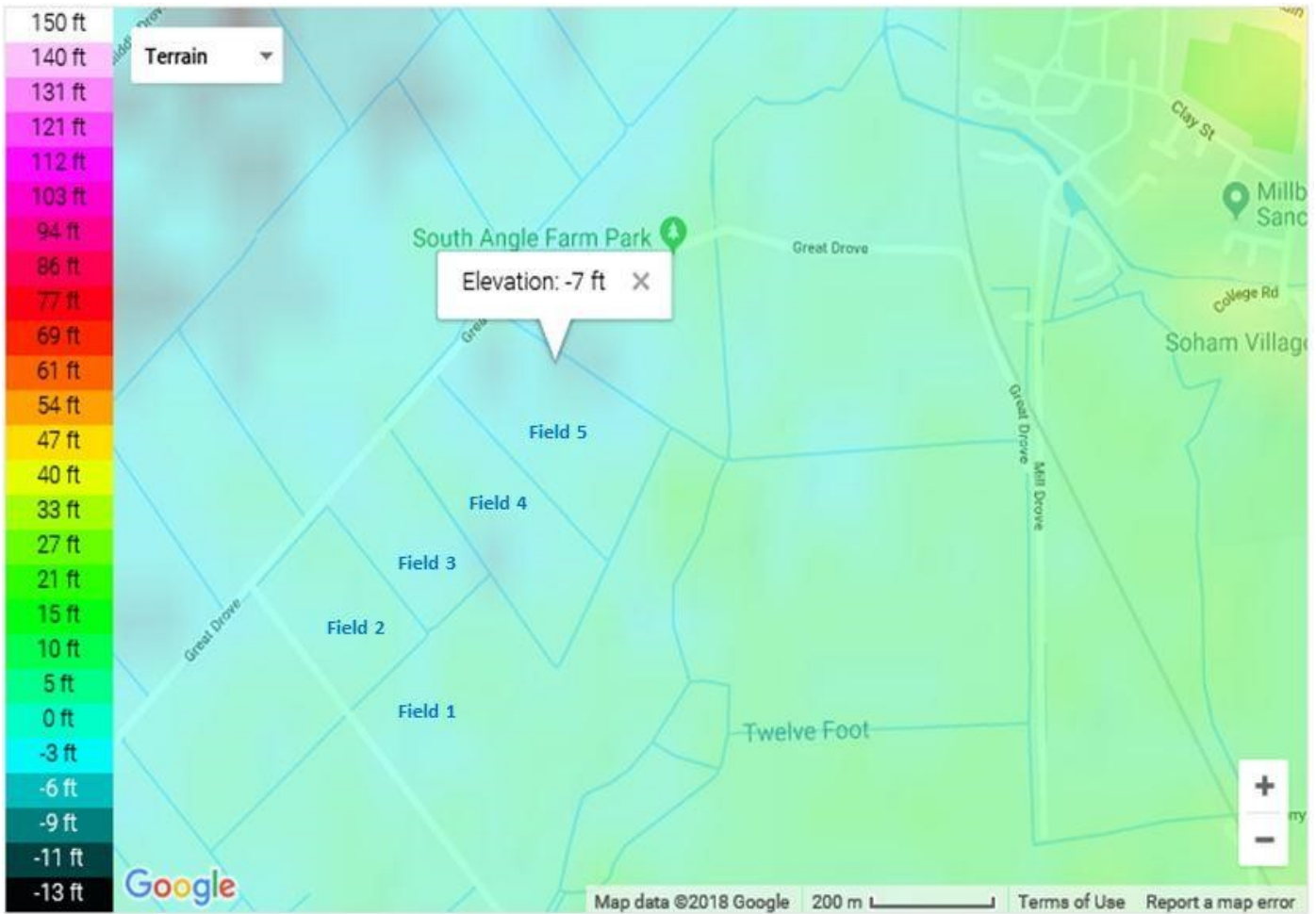


Fig 3: Areas Field Walked

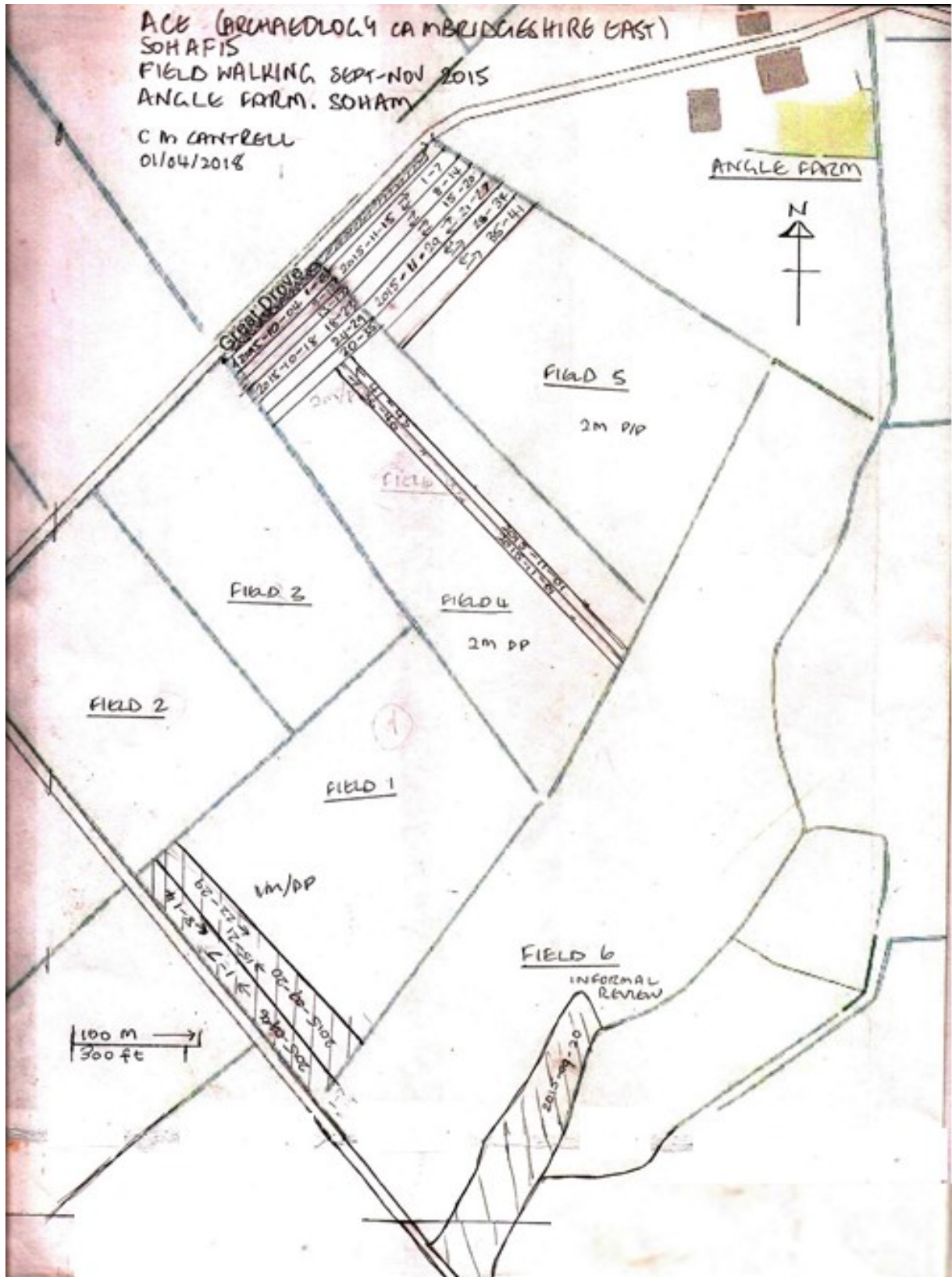
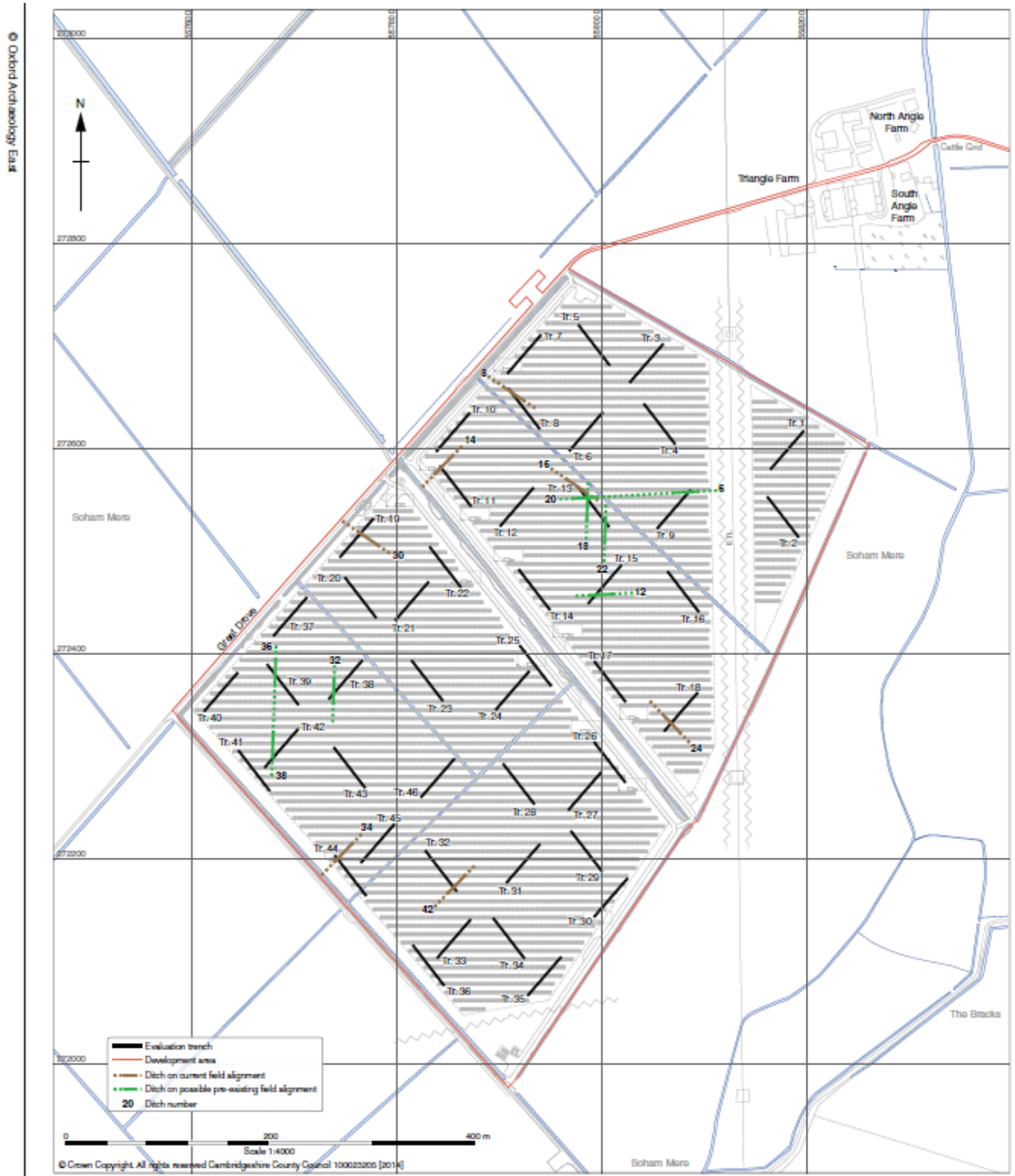
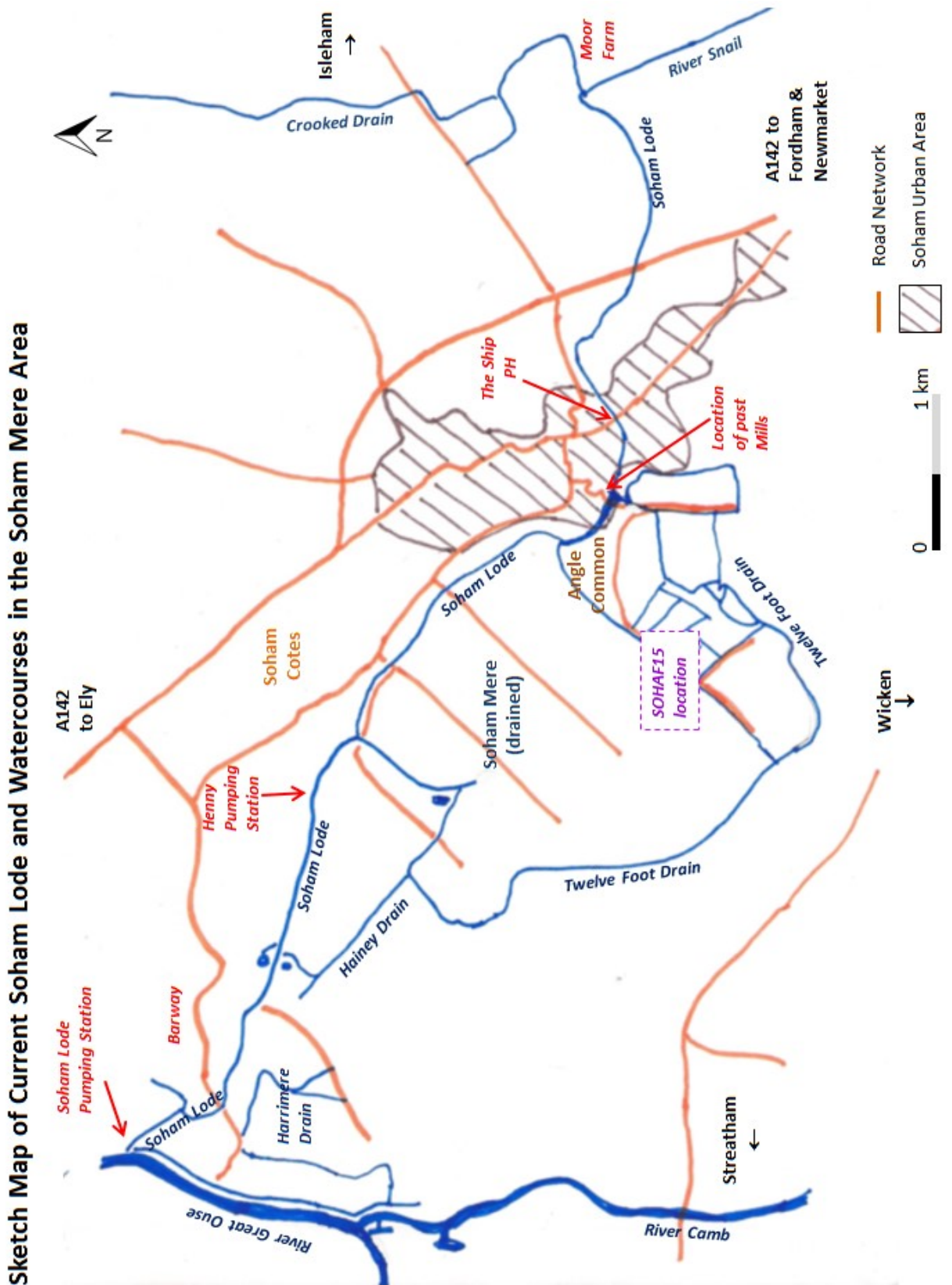


Fig 4: Oxford Archaeology East Evaluation Trenches



Ref: Oxford Archaeology East, Report 1652, in August 2014 (OASIS No: oxfordar3-187914)

Fig 5: Sketch of Watercourses Surrounding Soham Mere



LIST OF PLATES

Plate 1: Field 5 - Waterlogged



Plate 2: Field 4 – Measuring Walking Grids



Plate 3: Field 1 - Fog



Plate 4: Great Drove



Plate 5: Field 1 – Selection of Worked Flints



Plate 6: Field 2 – Selection of Worked Flints

Found on scoping visit



Plate 7: Field 4 – Pottery Finds

C17 Staffordshire slipware

C19 Plate



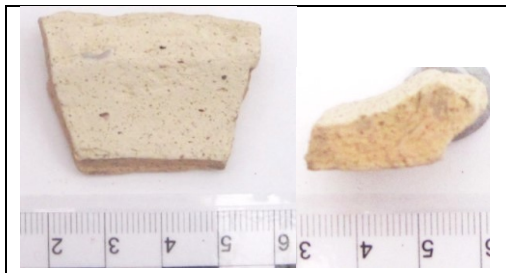
C19 Painted Concrete



Medieval Red Ware



???



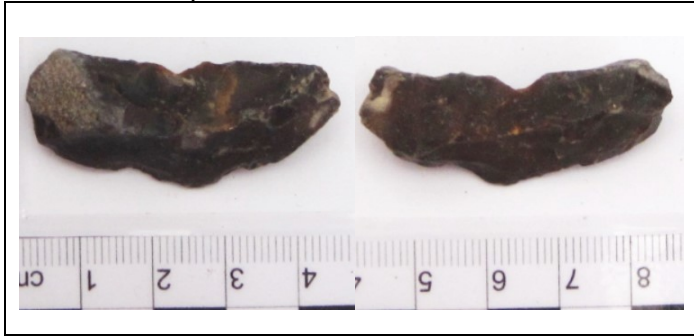
Medieval Glazed Red Ware



Plate 8: Field 4 – Selection of Worked Flints



Notched scraper



Potential core

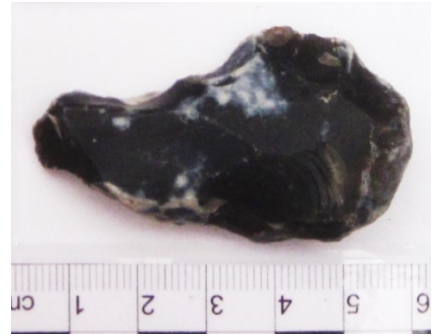
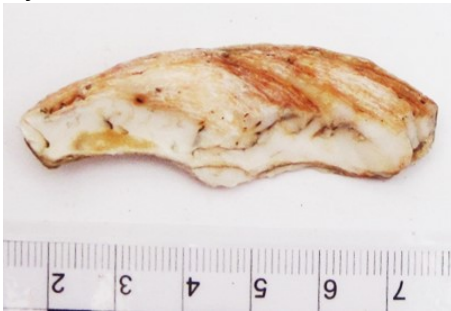


Plate 9: Field 4 – Other Finds

Oyster Shell



Burnishing Stone



Shell jewellery (modern)



Plate 9: Field 5 – Selection of Flints

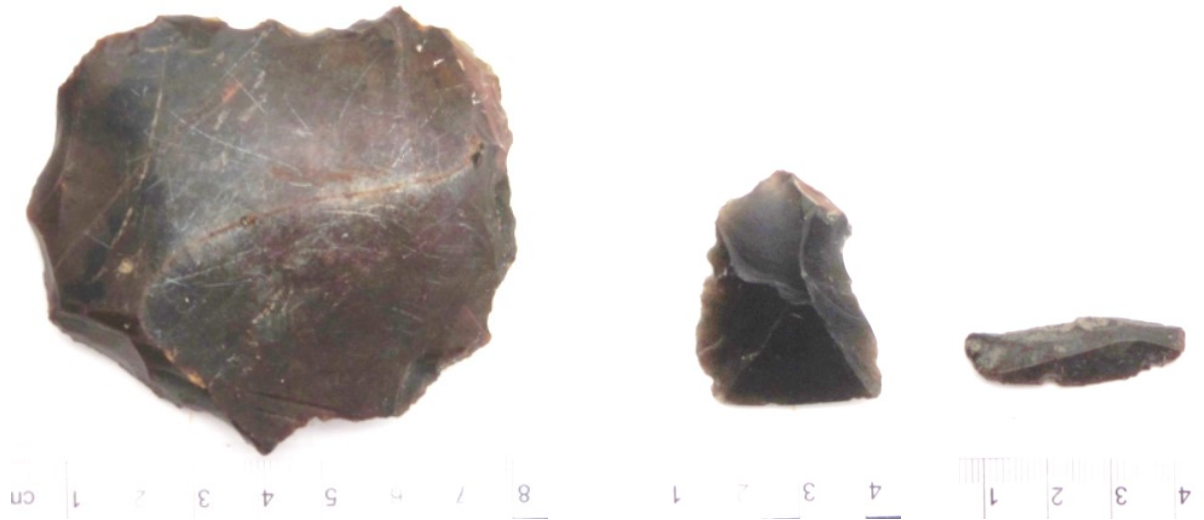


Plate 10: Field 5 – Selection of Pottery

Medieval Glazed Red Ware



Potential Bronze Age sherd



Potential Roman sherd



Burnt Glazed Red Ware



Plate11: Ballast Stones

Example of small stone – weight 275gm



Example of most common size found – weight 550gm

