

T H A M E S V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Finmere Quarry Northern Extension,
Banbury Road, Finmere, Oxfordshire**

An Archaeological fieldwalking survey

by Steve Ford

Site Code: FQF10/47

(SP6260 3280)

Finmere Quarry Northern Extension, Banbury Road, Finmere, Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Fieldwalking Survey

For Premier Aggregates

by SteveFord

ThamesValleyArchaeologicalServices

Ltd

SiteCodeFQ010/47

December 2010

Summary

Site name: Finmere Quarry Northern Extension, Banbury Road, Finmere, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SP6260 3280

Site activity: Fieldwalking

Date and duration of project: 9th–11th November 2010

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Steve Ford

Site code: FQO 10/47

Area of site: *c.* 11 ha

Summary of results: A modest volume of struck flint was recovered from the proposal site, well dispersed across the areas fieldwalked, without any clustering. The material is thought to be largely or wholly of later Neolithic or Bronze Age date. A single undated sherd of pottery was also recovered.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museums Service in due course.

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| Report edited/checked by: Steve Preston ✓ 20.12.10 |
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Finmere Quarry Northern Extension, Banbury Road, Finmere, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Fieldwalking Survey

By Steve Ford

Report 10/47

Introduction

This fieldwalking study was commissioned by Mr Andrew Josephs of Andrew Josephs Archaeological Consultants, 16 South Terrace, Sowerby, Thirsk, Yorkshire, YO7 1RH on behalf of Premier Aggregates Limited, Finmere Quarry, Banbury Road, Finmere, Oxfordshire as a preliminary part of an assessment of the archaeological potential of the land at Finmere Quarry Northern Extension. This report constitutes a non-invasive stage of a process to determine the presence/absence, extent, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains that may be affected by development within the area.

The site

The whole proposal site comprises an irregular parcel of arable land centred at NGR SP6260 3280 covering about 11ha, to the south-west of Finmere on the south side of Banbury Road. The site comprises two arable fields on land that slopes very gently from north to south but with very slight traces of a shallow dry valley aligned east-west and which is more marked to the east. The site lies at a height of 120m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is fluvioglacial deposits (BGS 2002).

Planning background and development proposals

The site is to be promoted for mineral extraction but no definitive scheme is available at present.

Archaeological background

The site lies in the area known to have contained archaeological deposits. Archaeological works carried out during the rerouting of the B4031, just south of Finmere, identified an occupation site of Late Iron Age or early Roman date (Grundon 1999, 31). Previous archaeological excavation associated with the quarry works identified Bronze Age funerary activity, Middle Iron Age funerary activity and enclosed settlement and earlier prehistoric flint work scatters of probable Neolithic or Bronze Age date (Josephs 2005). However, an archaeological watching brief carried out north of Foxley Fields Farm, just to the south of the newly aligned B4031 recorded no

features (Hammond 2002) and evaluation to the south east of the current quarry complex revealed only undated gullies and a sherd of late medieval pottery (Mundin and Ford 2008).

Objectives and methodology

The fieldwalking took place along north–south lines spaced at 10m intervals and based on the National Grid. Material was collected from units of 10m intervals along these lines with an average search width of 1m. This approximates to a 10% sample of the surface area of the site. The methodology is comparable with that practised in other regions of central southern England (Richards 1990; Ford 1987a, appendix 1) though the sample fraction here is higher. All pre-19th century artefacts (primarily struck flint and pottery) were to be collected and retained. Dense scatters of brick/tile or burnt flint were to be recorded in the field but only a sample of material collected from these for dating purposes.

A record was made of conditions which may have influenced recovery rates, such as stoniness of ground, vegetation cover, bright sunlight and which individual walked which line. The topography was also recorded to assist in interpretation of the finds.

Results

A total area of *c.* 10ha was fieldwalked by 3 individuals.

Collection conditions

All of the fieldwalked areas had been planted with a wheat/barley crop which was of very low growth. In effect the whole ground surface was observable. The weather was mostly overcast for the majority of the time of the survey and the ground damp. Fine stone with occasional larger pieces (including flint) was encountered across the site.

Finds

Pottery

Just a single tiny fragment (<1g) of medieval or earlier pottery was recovered. It is a featureless body sherd in a soft orange-red fabric tempered with fossil shell.

Struck flint

In all, 62 struck pieces were recovered, including a gun flint of post-medieval date, as detailed in Appendix 1. The collection comprised 46 flakes, 3 cores, 1 core fragment, 8 spalls (pieces less than 20x20mm), 3 scrapers a

post-medieval gun flint. All were made of flint with one or two pieces patinated a bluish white colour and one piece was burnt. The distribution is shown in Figure 2. As relatively little natural flint was present on the site, it is not thought that many pieces are of modern (plough-struck) origin. Most pieces, though, have edge damage presumably from ploughing. The sub-division of blades/narrow flakes from broad flakes was not done metrically (cf. Saville 1980) but assigned by eye. Relatively low proportions of the material can be regarded as related to procurement activity.

Chronology

As a whole, the flint collection is dominated by broad flakes with just a single, possible blade-like piece recovered. Three cores, all broad flake, were found. The retouched component of the collection, all of which are scrapers, contains no closely datable items. Scrapers are a ubiquitous tool of very limited chronological significance. It is considered that the collection is largely or wholly of later Neolithic or Bronze Age date (Ford 1987b).

Interpretation of the struck flint distribution

Before the recorded distribution of the lithic material can be interpreted in terms of its archaeological significance an assessment of the nature of the use and discard of struck flint and the activity represented by flint scatters is required. In contrast to pottery, which is predominantly used only on occupation sites, struck flint is used, and discarded or lost, on, adjacent to, and well away from occupied areas. Procurement of raw materials itself produces further material not necessarily located close to occupied areas, and as for pottery, used flint can end up in middens which are later used to manure arable fields. Durable flint, much of which is not chronologically distinctive, was widely used and discarded during much of prehistory, as settlement patterns and subsistence strategies changed. As such, it should not be surprising that struck flint can be widely distributed across the landscape without marked clustering, or with widespread clusters of higher density material representing repeated use of the same location over many generations (Foley 1981). Coupled to this are taphonomic processes such as ploughing and colluviation which can lead to the wide dispersal of originally dense and discrete scatters (Yorston *et al.* 1990). There is a further body of evidence to indicate that much early prehistoric occupation is now represented only by scatters of struck flint within the topsoil (Healy 1987). Large quantities of struck flint need not imply the presence of significant numbers of sub-surface features.

For this project, despite a persistent presence of struck flint across most of the area, there is no marked clustering of material, with what appears to be a random/uniform distribution across the whole site area. The

density of material recovered is also low when compared to data produced by large scale surveys (e.g. Ford 1987a). The density of struck flint here is lower than the threshold for designation as a 'site' from these surveys which included geological outcrops both rich and poor in the presence of natural flint. There is nevertheless a persistent presence of struck flint here as a background scatter, but which presumably represents off-site, landscape scale activity such as casual loss or discard, or dispersal by manuring practice.

Conclusion

The fieldwalking has resulted in the recovery of a modest quantity of lithic material and a single fragment of undated pottery. This material indicates some prehistoric activity in the area, but is not necessarily indicative of the presence of contemporary occupation sites and may have no more relevance than demonstrating the widespread use and discard of flint tools across the landscape.

References

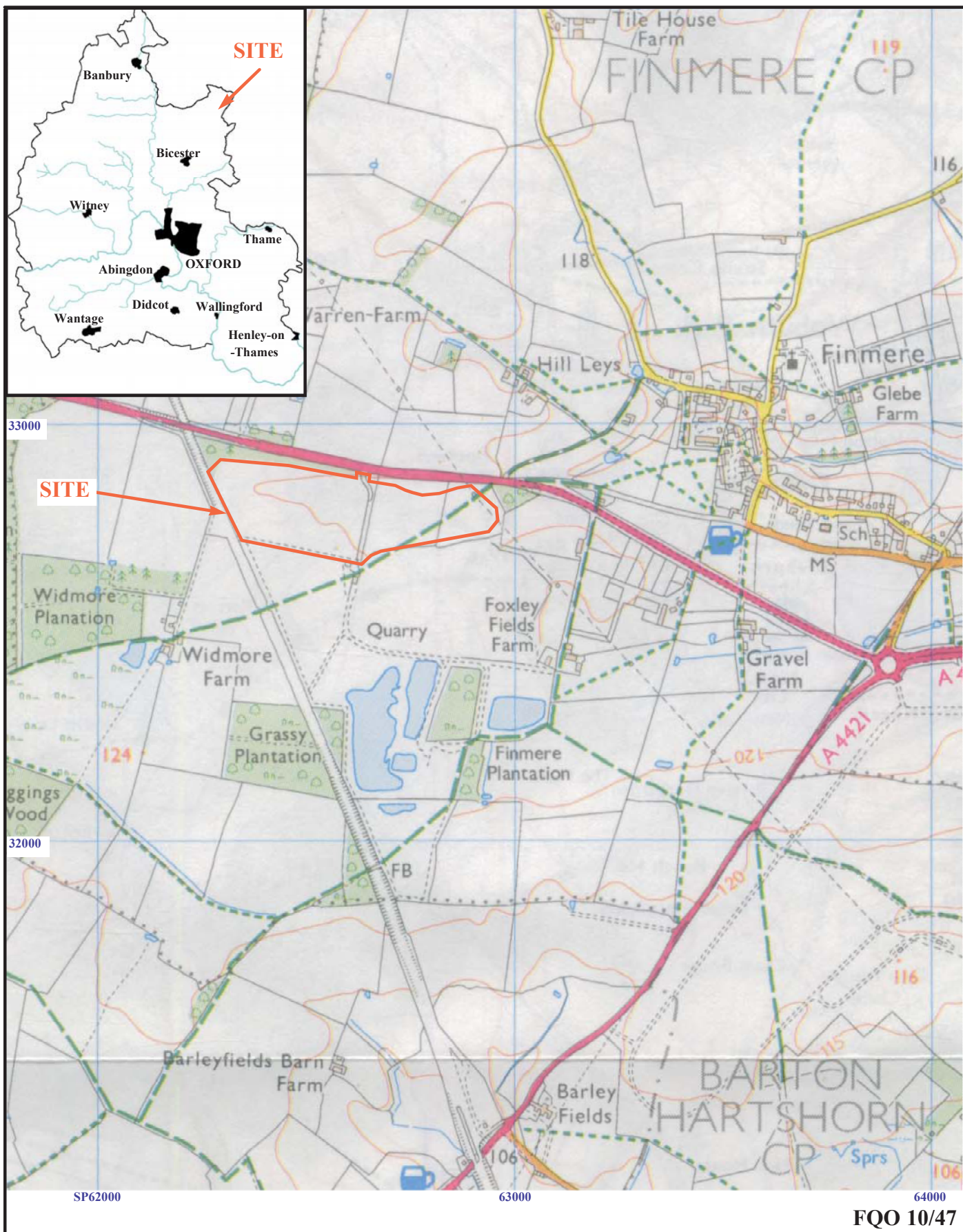
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APPENDIX 1: Struck flint Summary

| | |
|----------------------|----|
| Blades/narrow flakes | 1 |
| Flakes | 45 |
| Cores | 3 |
| Core fragments | 1 |
| Spalls | 8 |
| Scrapers | 3 |
| Gun flint | 1 |

APPENDIX 2: Struck flint detailed locations

| <i>NGR East (SP)</i> | <i>NGR North</i> | <i>Intact flake</i> | <i>Broken flake</i> | <i>Possible broken blade</i> | <i>Spall</i> | <i>Core</i> | <i>Other</i> |
|----------------------|------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| 62330 | 32770 | | | | | 1 | |
| 62330 | 32790 | | 1 | | | | |
| 62330 | 32850 | | | | | | scraper |
| 62330 | 32860 | | | | | 1 | |
| 62330 | 32870 | 1 | | | | | |
| 62350 | 32860 | 1 | | | | | |
| 62360 | 32880 | | | | 1 | | |
| 62360 | 32790 | 1 | | | | | |
| 62370 | 32890 | | | | | 1 | |
| 62370 | 32850 | 1 | | | | | |
| 62370 | 32790 | | | | | | core fragment |
| 62380 | 32860 | | 1 | | | | |
| 62380 | 32740 | | | | 1 | | |
| 62390 | 32890 | 1 | | | | | |
| 62400 | 32790 | 1 | | | | | |
| 62400 | 32820 | 1 | | | | | |
| 62400 | 32800 | | | | | | gun flint |
| 62410 | 32880 | | | | | 1 | |
| 62450 | 32780 | | | | | 1 | |
| 62460 | 32850 | | 1(burnt) | | | | |
| 62470 | 32760 | | | | 1 | | |
| 62470 | 32780 | 1 | | | | | |
| 62480 | 32880 | | | | | | Scraper |
| 62480 | 32790 | 1 | | | | | |
| 62500 | 32790 | | 1 | | | | |
| 62510 | 32780 | | | | | | Scraper |
| 62520 | 32760 | 1 | | | | | |
| 62520 | 32780 | | 1 | | | | |
| 62530 | 32780 | | | | | 1 | |
| 62540 | 32710 | | 1 | | | | |
| 62540 | 32830 | | 1 | | | | |
| 62550 | 32730 | | 1 | | | | |
| 62560 | 32820 | | | | | 1 | |
| 62560 | 32720 | 1 | | | | | |
| 62590 | 32730 | | 1 | | | | |
| 62600 | 32710 | | 1 | | | | |
| 62600 | 32780 | | | | | 1 | |
| 62620 | 32740 | | 1 | | | | |
| 62640 | 32770 | | 2(1pat) | | | | |
| 62660 | 32760 | | 1 | | | | |
| 62700 | 32740 | | 1 | | | | |
| 62700 | 32720 | | 1 | | | | |
| 62710 | 32820 | | | | | 1 | |
| 62720 | 32820 | 1 | 1 | | | | |
| 62720 | 32830 | | 1 | | | | |
| 62720 | 32770 | 1 | | | | | |
| 62740 | 32710 | 1 | | | | | |
| 62750 | 32760 | 1 | | | | | |
| 62760 | 32770 | 1 | | | | | |
| 62760 | 32780 | | 1 | | | | |
| 62780 | 32750 | | 1 | | | | |
| 62790 | 32810 | | 1 | | | | |
| 62820 | 32760 | 1 | | | | | |
| 62830 | 32810 | 1 | | | | | |
| 62840 | 32720 | | | | | 1 | |
| 62850 | 32790 | | 1 | | | | |
| 62850 | 32740 | | 1 | | | | |
| 62900 | 32820 | | 1 | | | | |
| 62930 | 32720 | 1 | | | | | |
| 62950 | 32840 | | 1 | | | | |
| 62960 | 32760 | 1 | | | | | |



**Finmere Quarry Northern Extension, Finmere, Oxfordshire, 2010
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Figure 1. Location of site in relation to Finmere and Oxfordshire.

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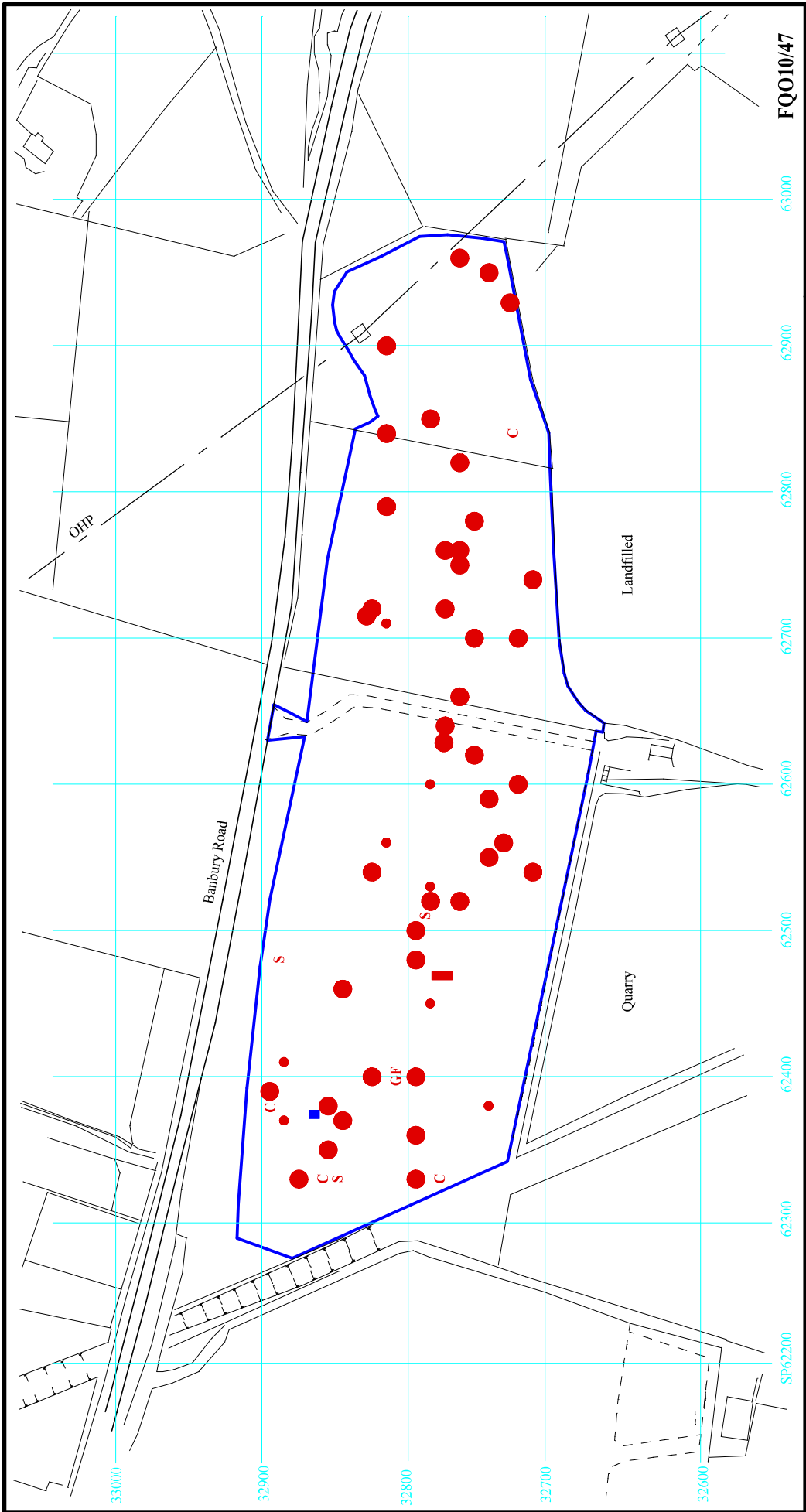
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Archaeological Fieldwalking Survey

Figure 2. Detailed location of site and artefacts recovered.



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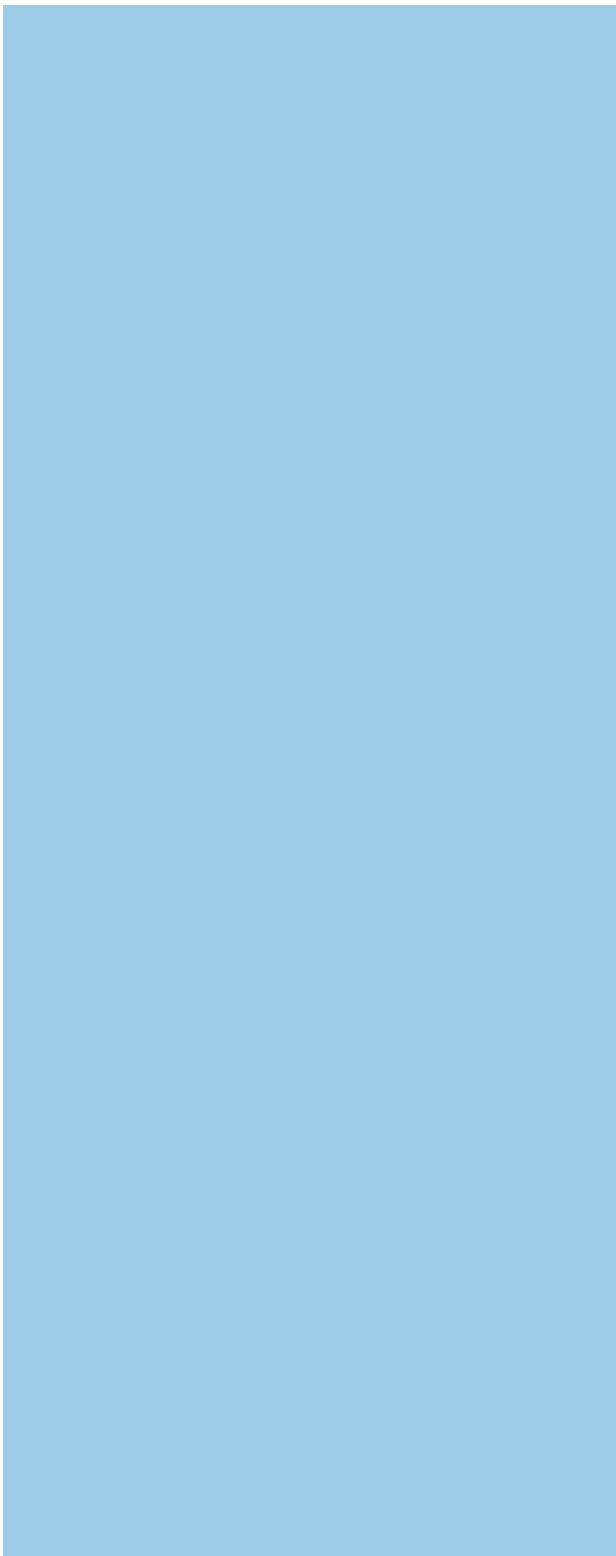
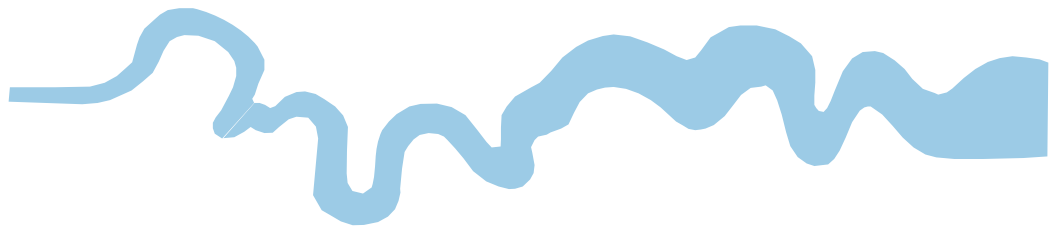
| | |
|--|--------------|
| | Flake |
| | Narrow flake |
| | Spall |
| | Core |
| | Scraper |
| | Gun flint |
| | Pottery |



TIME CHART

| | Calendar Years |
|----------------------------|-----------------|
| Modern _____ | AD 1901 |
| Victorian _____ | AD 1837 |
| Post Medieval _____ | AD 1500 |
| Medieval _____ | AD 1066 |
| Saxon _____ | AD 410 |
| Roman _____ | AD 43 |
| Iron Age _____ | BC/AD 750 BC |
| Bronze Age: Late _____ | 1300 BC |
| Bronze Age: Middle _____ | 1700 BC |
| Bronze Age: Early _____ | 2100 BC |
| Neolithic: Late | 3300 BC |
| Neolithic: Early | 4300 BC |
| Mesolithic: Late | 6000 BC |
| Mesolithic: Early | 10000 BC |
| Palaeolithic: Upper | 30000 BC |
| Palaeolithic: Middle | 70000 BC |
| Palaeolithic: Lower | 2,000,000 BC |





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