THAMES VALLEY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

SERVICES

Field 8, West Shinfield, Reading, Berkshire

Archaeological Fieldwalking Survey

by Steve Ford

Site Code: WSR10/111

(SU 7270 6720)

Field 8, West Shinfield, Reading, Berkshire

An Archaeological Fieldwalking Survey

For CgMs Consulting

by Steve Ford

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code MFB10/46

June 2010

Summary

Site name: Field 8, West Shinfield, Reading, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 7270 6720

Site activity: Fieldwalking

Date and duration of project: 19th–20th October 2010

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Steve Ford

Site code: WSR 10/111

Area of site: *c*. 13 ha

Summary of results: A small number of certain and possible prehistoric struck flints were recorded, probably of later Neolithic or Bronze Age, along with a small number of sherds of post-medieval pottery. There is no marked clustering to the distribution of these finds across the site. These finds are likely to represent either casual loss or discard across the landscape, or the manuring of farmland using midden material generated from settlement sites.

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

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Preston✓ 26.10.10
	Jo Pine ✓ 26.10.10

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Field 8, West Shinfield, Reading, Berkshire
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Report 10/111

Introduction

This fieldwalking study was commissioned by Mr Greg Pugh of CgMs Consulting, Burlington House, Lypiatt Road, Cheltenham GL50 2SY on behalf of the University of Reading as an assessment of the archaeological potential of a parcel of land known as Field 8, West Shinfield, Reading, Berkshire (SU 7270 6720) (Fig. 1). The 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 study site comprises an irregular parcel of land centred at SU 727 672 and covering about 13ha, to the south-west of Shinfield. High Copse Farm lies to the east and Hyde End Lane forms the western boundary (Fig. 2). The river Loddon flows 1km to the south-east. The site is on more or less level ground at a height of 50m above Ordnance Datum in the north, and 48m in the south. The underlying geology is valley gravel (BGS 1946). The land is currently under arable use with a recently emerged cereal crop present at the time the fieldwalking took place.

The fieldwork was carried out by Steve Ford and Danielle Milbank on 19th and 20th October 2010. The archive is currently held by Thames Valley Archaeological Services in Reading and will be deposited with Reading Museum in due course. The site code is WSR10/111.

Planning background and development proposals

An outline application for resident development of Shinfield West has been submitted by the University of Reading to Wokingham Borough Council (Application Reference O/2010/1432 Hollow Lane, South of Church Lane, Hyde End Road, Shinfield, Reading). The whole proposal site, approximately 85ha in extent (Fig. 2), comprises an irregular shaped plot of farm land to the west of Shinfield (SU 7250 6800). The current report is concerned with only one field within this larger area, as the rest of the site was previously examined as part of the Loddon Valley Survey (Ford 1997).

The archaeological potential of the wider site has been highlighted in a desk-based assessment prepared by CgMs (2008, updated 2010). The desk-based assessment summarizes the potential for archaeological deposits within the application site as moderate to low potential for Bronze Age-Neolithic activity and a moderate-high potential for Iron Age/Roman activity across the southern, northern and eastern-most extent of the application site. The southern half of field 8 (Fig. 2) has been designated in the Local Plan as an Area of High Archaeological Potential due to the presence of cropmarks (possibly attributed to Iron Age activity) identified during aerial photographic survey. In summary, the potential of the site stems from its location on the fringes of the Loddon Valley within an area where there is a range of archaeological finds and sites recorded. Previous field survey (Ford 1997) located a dense scatter of struck flint within the overall proposal area with a small cluster of Roman pottery also noted.

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), including across the remainder of the application area here, 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

Collection conditions

The site was fieldwalked by two individuals. The fieldwalked areas had been planted with a wheat/barley crop which was of low growth. In effect, the whole ground surface was observable. The weather was frequently sunny and for most of the survey area the ground was dry. A moderate proportion of stone (gravel) was present across the site.

Finds

Struck flint

In all, just eleven pieces of struck flint were recovered (Appendix 1). The distribution is shown in Figure 3. A moderate volume of natural flint was present on the site and some of the pieces collected are possibly of modern (plough-struck) origin. Similarly, some of the flint may have been introduced to the site along with powdered chalk to lime the fields.

Chronology

As a whole, the flint collection comprises only broad flakes with no indication of any narrow flakes indicative of a Mesolithic or earlier Neolithic component. The flakes in themselves though, are not well dated and could be of any date from the Mesolithic through to the end of the Bronze Age (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 worked, used, and discarded or lost, on, adjacent to, and 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, however, despite the sample size of 10% (line spacing 10m) contrasting with the 4% (line spacing of 25m) used by the Loddon Valley and East Berkshire Surveys (Ford 1997; Ford 1987a) the volume of flint finds recovered is very low. This is emphasized by comparison with three flint scatter 'sites' (LV40, LV84 and LV85) recorded by the Loddon Valley Survey (Ford 1997; fig. 7a) just to the north east of Field 8 where,

after allowing for the differences in sample size, up to 20 times as much struck flint was recovered. It seems most likely that the flint recovered here reflects off-site activity in the landscape in general.

Pottery

The pottery collection comprised just five pieces (Appendix 2) of late post-medieval pottery with the distribution as shown on Figure 6. The pattern is best interpreted as representing material incorporated into manure which is subsequently spread onto farmland.

Conclusion

The fieldwalking has resulted in the recovery of a very small amount of prehistoric struck flint and post-medieval pottery. None of the material is noteworthy in itself and the density recovered for both categories is best interpreted as representing casual loss/discard or manuring practice across the wider landscape. None of these finds appear to relate to the cropmarks reported for this area.

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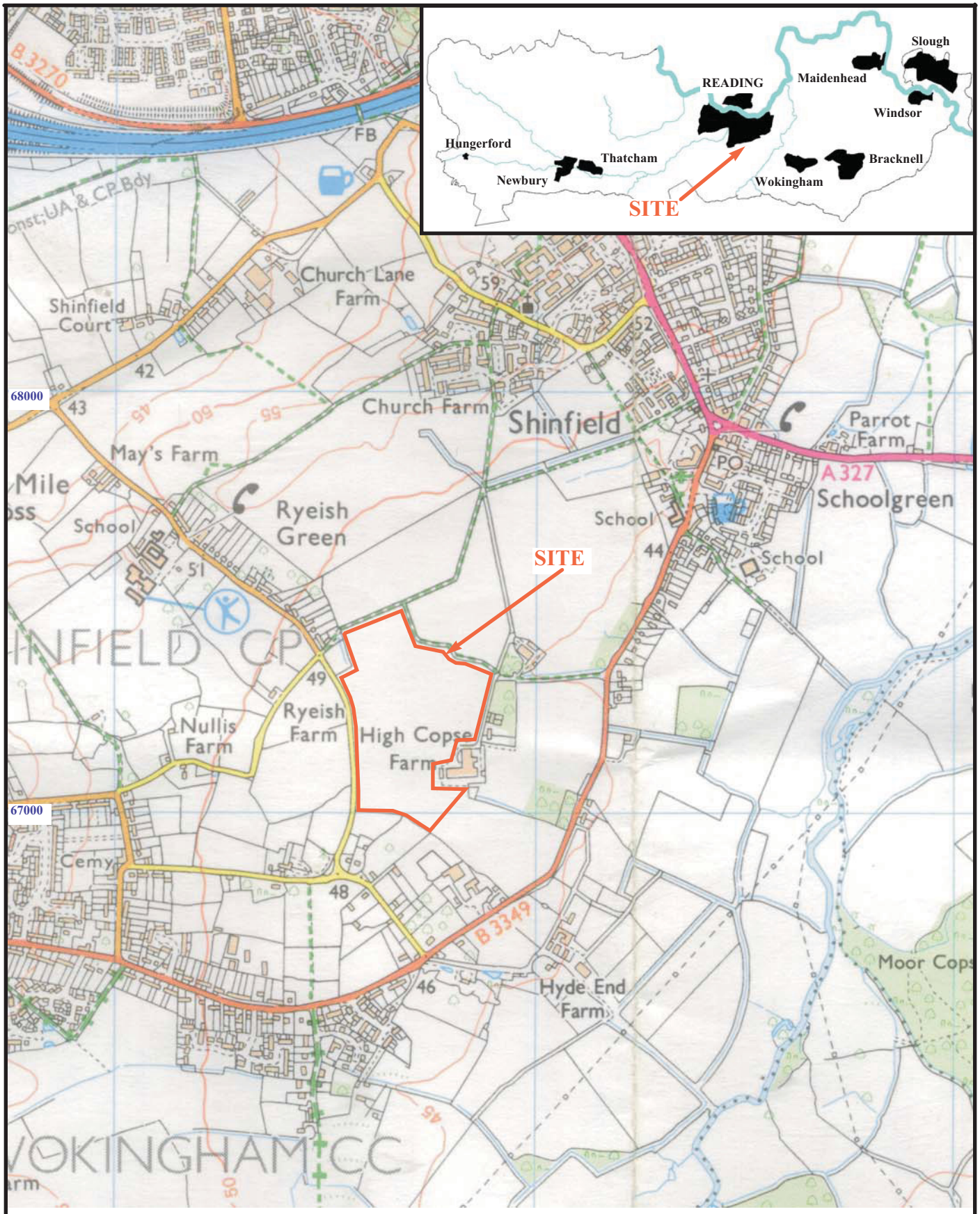
APPENDIX 1: Struck flint

East	*North*	*Type*
72570	67370	Flake
72590	67080	Flake
72610	67210	Flake
72620	67250	Flake
72630	67330	Flake
72640	67190	Flake
72720	67190	Bashed lump (ploughstruck?)
72780	67380	Flake
72870	67320	Flake (ploughstruck?)
72780	67320	Flake (ploughstruck?)
72800	67160	Flake

APPENDIX 2: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) plotted by grid co-ordinate

East	*North*	*No*	*Wt*	*Fabric*
72600	67350	1	48	Post-medieval red ware, internal brown glaze
72670	67250	1	15	Brown stoneware
72710	67190	1	51	Post-medieval red ware rim
72710	67200	1	26	Stoneware, pale yellow interior, grey exterior
72740	67220	1	12	Post-medieval red ware, brown interior glaze



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Field 8, West Shinfield, Reading, Berkshire, 2010
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Figure 1. Location of site within Shinfield and Berkshire.

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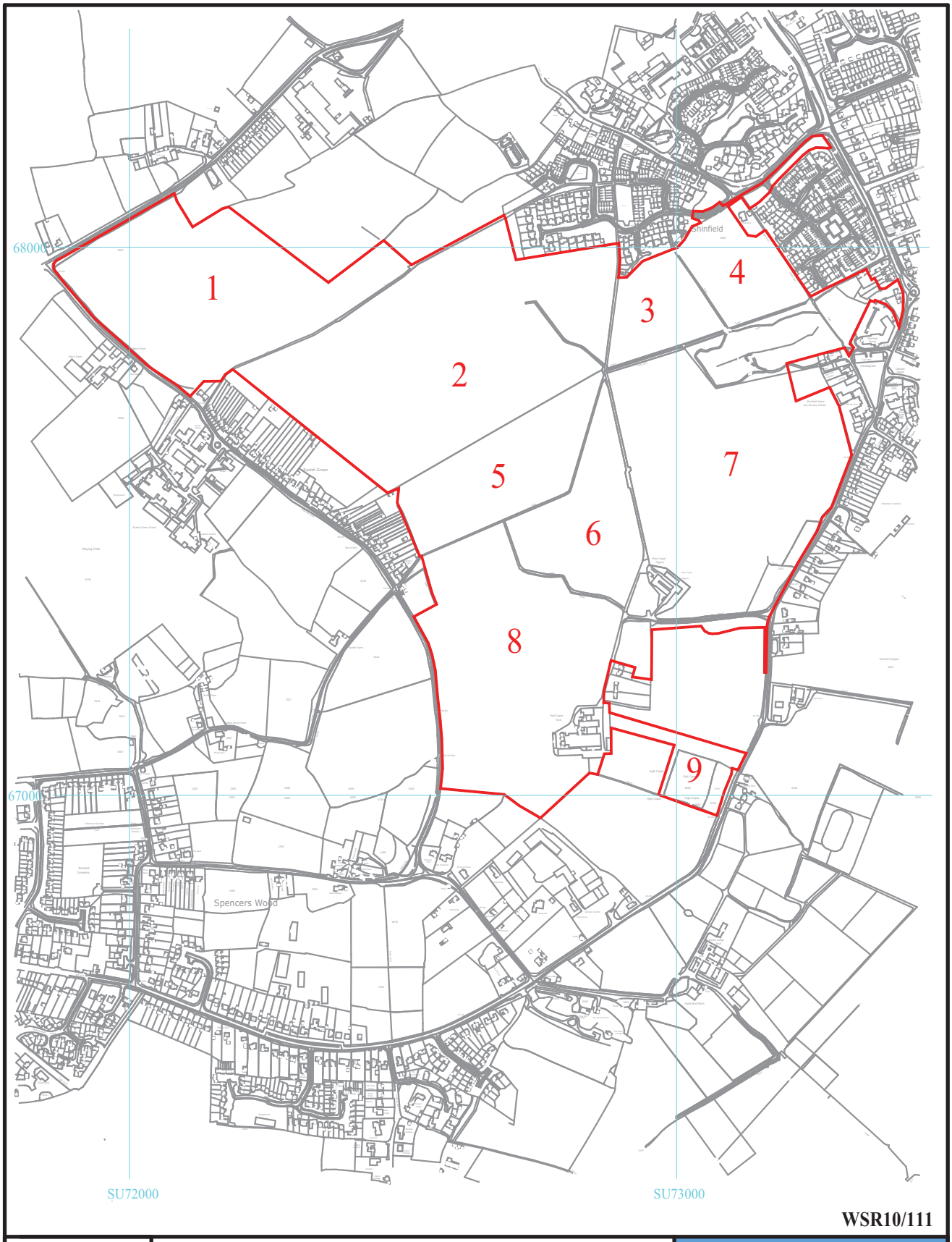

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Field 8, West Shinfield, Reading, Berkshire, 2010
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Figure 2. Location of Field 8 and Proposal area.
Reproduced from Ordnance Survey digital mapping under licence.

0 500m

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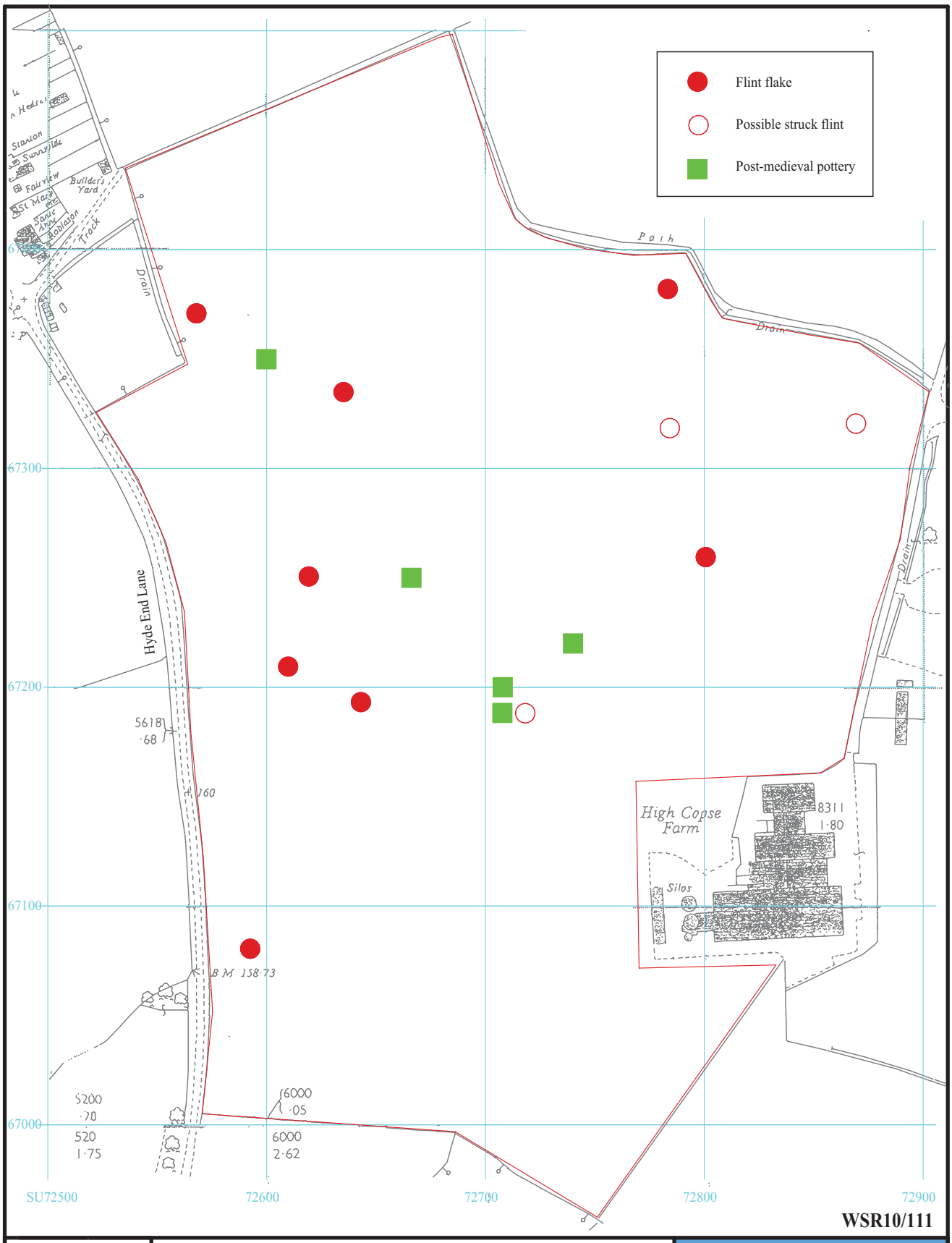

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Figure 3. Distribution of flint and pottery finds.

0 100m

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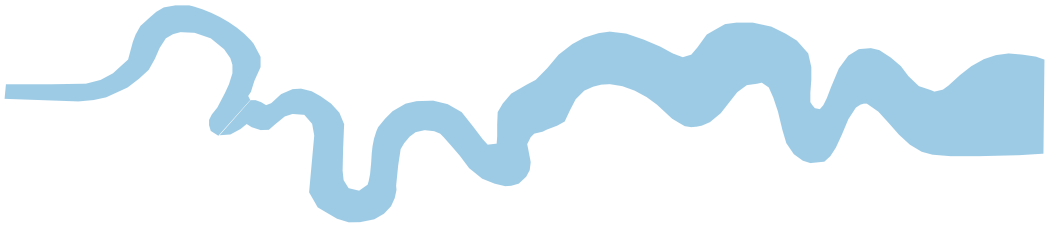
TIME CHART

	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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