



Northamptonshire County Council

Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological Fieldwalking and Metal

Detecting Survey

on land north of Thetford

Norfolk

May 2009



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June 2009

Report 09/056

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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Archaeological Fieldwalking and Metal Detecting Survey on land north of Thetford, Norfolk	
Short description	Northamptonshire Archaeology conducted an archaeological fieldwalking and metal detecting survey on land proposed for a new biomass CHP facility on land to the north of Thetford, Norfolk. A single field of 15ha was surveyed. The survey recorded 51 pieces of worked flint, including two tools, three pieces of ceramic tile and a single potsherd. No meaningful artefact distribution pattern was discernable. The metal detecting survey found only modern debris.	
Project type	Fieldwalking survey	
Site status	None	
Previous work	Geophysical survey (Butler 2009)	
Current Land use	Arable	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type/ period		
Significant finds	None	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Norfolk	
Site address	Mundford Road, Thetford	
Study area	15ha	
OS Easting & Northing	TL 8623 8600	
Height OD	30-60m aOD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Norfolk Landscape Archaeology	
Project Design originator	Adrian Butler	
Director/Supervisor	Adrian Burrow	
Project Manager	Adrian Butler	
Sponsor or funding body	RPS Group	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	5 th May 2009	
End date	7 th May 2009	
ARCHIVES	Location	Content
Physical	NA	Worked flint, ceramics, Fe
Paper	NA	Site survey records
Digital	NA	Fieldwalking survey & GIS data
BIBLIOGRAPHY	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report	
Title	Archaeological Fieldwalking Survey on land north of Thetford, Norfolk	
Serial title & volume	Northamptonshire Archaeology report 09/056	
Author(s)	A Burrow	
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ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELDWALKING AND METAL DETECTING SURVEY
PROPOSED NEW BIOMASS CHP FACILITY, THETFORD, NORFOLK
MAY 2009

ABSTRACT

Northamptonshire Archaeology conducted an archaeological fieldwalking and metal detecting survey on land proposed for a new biomass CHP facility on land to the north of Thetford, Norfolk. A single field of 15ha was surveyed. The survey recorded 51 pieces of worked flint, including two tools, three pieces of ceramic tile and a single potsherd. The metal detecting survey found only modern debris. No meaningful artefact distribution pattern was discernable.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by RPS Group to conduct an archaeological fieldwalking and metal detecting survey on land on the northern edge of Thetford, Norfolk (NGR TL 8623 8600; Fig 1). The work was undertaken in relation to proposals for a Biomass CHP Facility, a renewable energy facility, (Ref SP/E/3/08/9014, Hamilton 2008).

The site was the subject of both geophysical survey (Butler 2009) and a fieldwalking / metal detecting survey, the scope of both which have been set out in a brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology, dated 20 June 2008 (Hamilton 2008).

The objectives of the survey were to identify concentrations of archaeological artefacts within the proposed development area. The fieldwork consisted of a survey covering approximately 15 hectares of land. Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER) issued the code NHER52658.

2 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The survey area occupies the north facing slope of an arable field approximately 1km north of Thetford. It is bounded to the west by the A134 Mundford Road. To the south, on top of the ridge, is a farm track and narrow spinney (Box Covert). Thetford Forest bounds the north of the site, with fields to the east. The maximum elevation is approximately 60m aOD, at the south-eastern corner of the site.

Drift geology is believed to consist of Breckland sands and gravel and the solid geology, white chalk (source: www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/index.html 1:650,000 scale geology mapping accessed 11/05/09).

At the time of the fieldwork the field had very recently been sown with sugar beet.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The brief (Hamilton 2008) reports an archaeological watching brief along the western edge of the development area, that took place in 2003. The investigation recorded quantities of prehistoric lithic debris, indicating the production of flint tools. A single fragment of Bronze Age pottery was also discovered.

The Archaeology Data Service (ADS) ADS.AHDS.ac.uk/catalogue accessed 12/05/09) records the find spot of a Roman vessel in the extreme south-west of the development area. In the wider archaeological landscape, a settlement of Bronze Age through to Roman date and a Roman temple were excavated at Fisons Way, 1200m to the west of the area. Excavations 1km south of the development area revealed an Iron Age to early 1st century AD complex of rectangular enclosures, hut sites (possibly shrines) and burials (ADS, as above).

4 METHODOLOGY

The area to be reconnoitred in the fieldwalking survey was walked systematically along parallel transects spaced at 20m intervals, in a roughly east to west orientation. These followed the line of the ploughed tram lines, ensuring minimal damage to the crop. A total of 22 transects were walked. Finds were recorded from approximately 1m either side of each transect. Transect locations were located in the field using traditionally cadastral methods, tied in by survey-grade GPS (Leica Systems 1200 RTK) equipment to ensure accuracy. Pro-forma record sheets were used to record and describe the individual finds.

Field conditions were acceptable for field walking, with the recently ploughed tilth and very low crop making surface visibility good. Very high surface concentrations of naturally occurring flint did make the observation of worked flints more difficult. Sheets describing the ground and weather conditions were also completed.

For the metal detecting survey the area was walked systematically along parallel transects spaced at 5m intervals, on the same orientation as the fieldwalking survey, again following the ploughed tram lines. Finds were recorded from approximately 1.5m either side of each transect. Field conditions were also acceptable for metal detecting, with the low crop and ploughed tilth making surface visibility and scanning good.

All procedures complied with the Northamptonshire County Council Health and Safety provisions and Northamptonshire Archaeology Health and Safety at Work Guidelines (NA 2003).

5 FIELDWALKING RESULTS

During the fieldwalking survey, 55 individual finds were recorded (Fig 2). The assemblage comprised overwhelmingly of struck flint, 51 of which were retrieved. Three fragments of ceramic tile and one potsherd were also recovered.

5.1 The flint by Adrian Burrow

A total of 51 pieces of worked flint were collected in the fieldwalking. The raw material is typically a mid-dark vitreous flint similar in character to unmodified natural flint found within glacial outwash deposits situated around the site. Patination is present on many of the pieces and ranges from a mottled bluish-gray-white to a translucent waxey film. Cortex present on 15 of the flints is white-greyish white in colour with a weathered surface suggesting that the raw material utilized was from glacial outwash deposits found on the surface within the immediate vicinity of the site. Most of the artefacts recovered show extensive post-depositional edge damage, largely as a result of ploughing.

Of the total number of artefacts recovered, 49 are waste flakes, with only two displaying signs of intentional retouch. One is a medial-distal flake fragment which appears to have been struck off a polished adze, with part of the distal surface showing evidence of polishing. It also displayed secondary, invasive working along one edge, possibly for reuse as a side-scraper. The second tool is a flake with retouch on its distal end and along part of one edge for use as an end-scraper.

The relatively small size of the assemblage and the general lack of diagnostic working precludes definitive dating. The flints can best be interpreted as a background scatter of locally sourced and worked material, probably from the late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age.

5.2 Ceramic tile and pottery by Pat Chapman

Three small fragments of abraded ceramic tile were collected. One fragment could be from a Roman *tegula* roof tile. Another fragment could be from a medieval or post-medieval roof tile. The remaining tiny fragment cannot be identified.

Two tiny fragments of a single potsherd were tempered with finely crushed flint. It cannot be definitively dated but is probably prehistoric in date (Andy Chapman pers comm).

6 METAL DETECTING RESULTS

No dateable objects from before the modern period were present in the metal detecting survey. Very high surface and buried concentrations of used shotgun cartridges made the observation of lower discriminator detection more difficult. The wooded area at the north of the field contained the highest concentration of modern and older shooting cartridges, with the discriminator set higher.

Various metal objects from industrial/farming machinery were scattered throughout the field. Only a sample of the industrial material was kept.

List of retained objects

- 1 Iron Plough tip
- 2 Iron Nails
- 3 Circular Iron Rod
- 4 Iron Hook
- 5 Iron Bolt
- 6 Padlock
- 7 Iron shoe heel
- 8 Iron Nail
- 9 Iron object comb shape
- 10 Circular iron cap
- 11 Iron sheet / small button with the initial N (modern)
- 12 Iron nails
- 13 Cast iron moulded object
- 14 Round headed nail
- 15 Iron shoe heel
- 16 Iron sheet with raised rectangular area

7 DISCUSSION

The fieldwalking survey confirmed the presence of lithic material within the field. Fifty-one flints struck from local raw material were collected, including two tools, indicating prehistoric tool-

making activity in the vicinity. Although the prehistoric flint mines at Grimes Graves are only some 6 km to the north-west the raw material appeared to have been sourced from local surface outwash deposits.

The paucity of pottery was noteworthy, although it is unclear to what extent this reflects the absence of activity or the lack of pottery survival within the ploughsoil. One sherd of possibly prehistoric pottery was recovered, along with three ceramic tile fragments that date from between the Roman and medieval periods.

There is little that can be discerned from the artefact distribution pattern other than to note the concentration of flint at the northern end of the field. Again, it is unclear whether this reflects a meaningful pattern or merely reflects post-depositional activity such as ploughing.

Only modern industrial and farming material was found in the metal detecting survey.

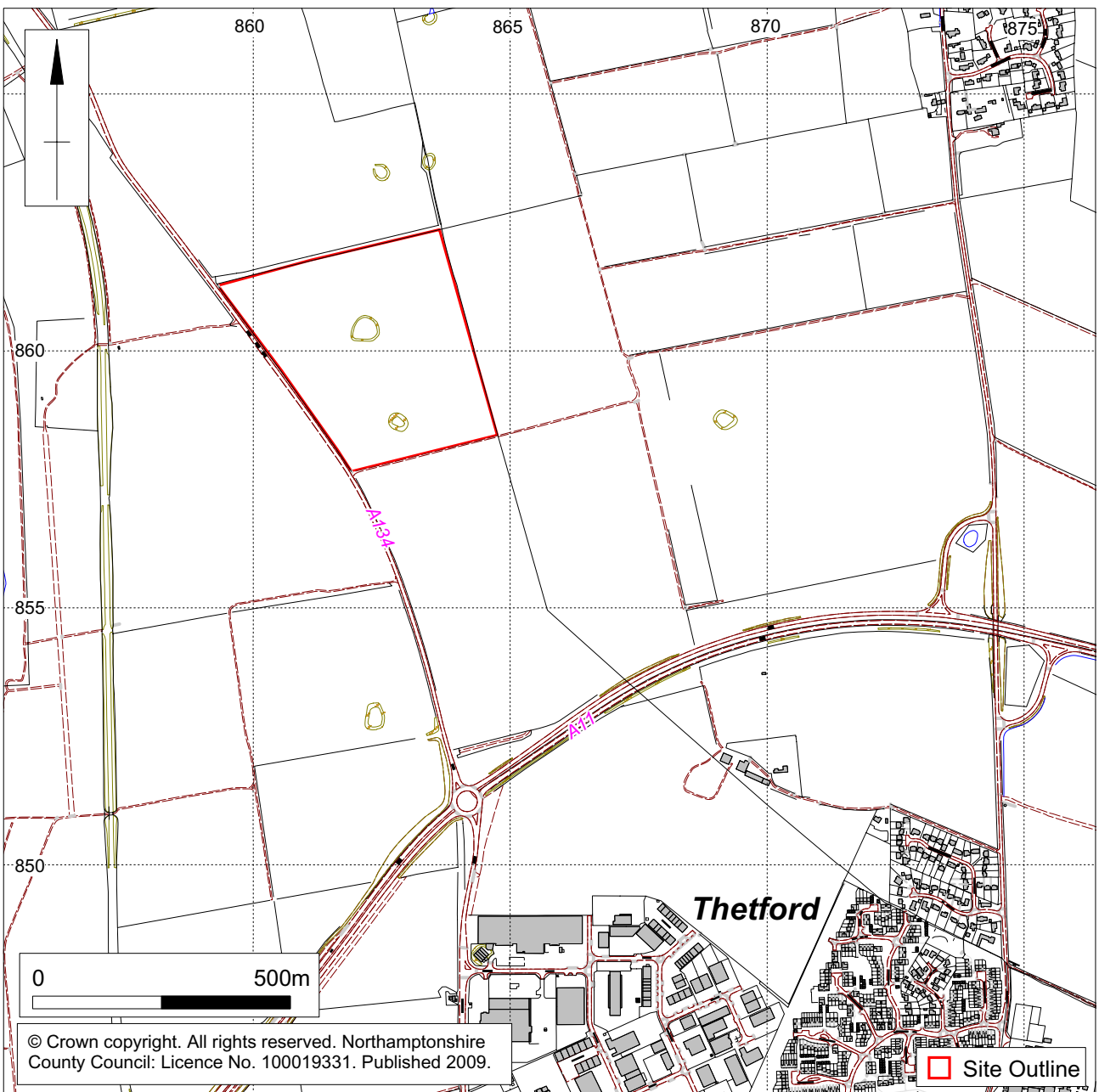
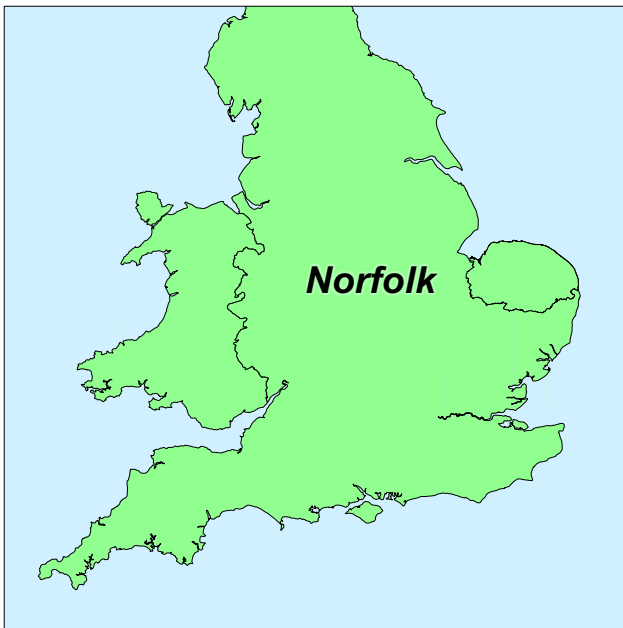
In relation to the geophysical survey (Butler 2009), the fieldwalking/metal detecting surveys suggests a similar lack of significant archaeological remains on the site. The geophysical survey found a pit alignment, possibly of late Bronze Age date, which appeared to be the oldest evidence for settlement. A section of ditch and part of a large enclosure suggested an episode of settlement probably during the Iron Age or Roman periods.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Butler, A, 2009 *Archaeological Geophysical Survey on Land North of Thetford, Norfolk* Northamptonshire Archaeology Report **09/057**

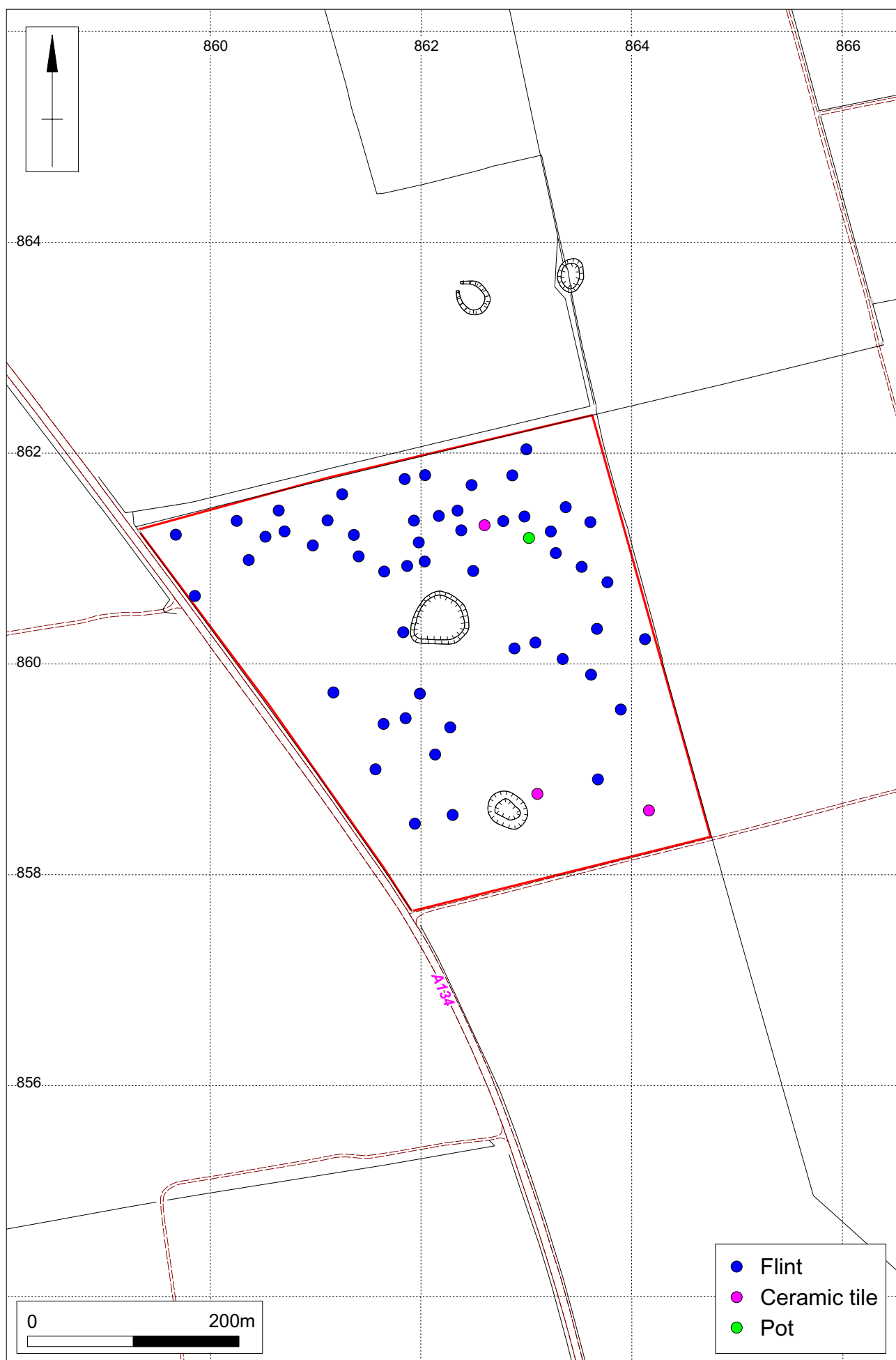
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NA 2008 *Land to the North of Thetford, Norfolk, Archaeological Fieldwalking Survey Archaeological Geophysical Survey, Method Statement*, Northamptonshire Archaeology



Scale 1:12,500

Site Location Fig 1



Scale 1:5000

Plot of fieldwalking finds distribution Fig 2