

FINDS FROM FIELDWALKING BY
THE FOUR PARISHES
ARCHAEOLOGY GROUP
ON
LAND AT WYRE PIDDLE,
WORCESTERSHIRE

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Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

10 February 2005

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Project 2275
Report 1327
WSM 33386

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Part 1 Project summary

Fieldwalking has recovered a scatter of Romano-British pottery (mid 1st to 4th century) and other finds dating up to the modern period. The full extent of the Roman pottery scatter was not established, however, two concentrations were identified.

The first scatter of Roman pottery lies along the eastern edge of the fieldwalk grid confirming previous fieldwalk results that identified settlement activity within this area (Fig 2). The second, more distinct, scatter lies to the north and potentially defines further settlement activity extending northwards below the area of made ground. A concentration of fire-cracked stone within this same area also suggests an early settlement date of late Iron Age to 2nd century AD (Fig 3). While a low intensity scatter of Roman pottery was identified in the south-west corner a distinctive concentration of burnt/fire-cracked stone was closely associated, again suggesting another potential settlement focus of late Iron Age date to 2nd century AD (Fig 3). A previously identified scatter of fired clay to the north of the land fieldwalked earlier in 2001 was not evident in this current phase of work. While this does not rule out the possibility of some form of industry or craft production it would suggest that this activity was on a limited scale and focus.

The current fieldwalking has further contributed to defining areas of settlement activity in the area and also potentially identified further areas of occupation or associated activity extending north of the land investigated. The scatters confirm the presence of Romano-British settlement activity and therefore add to and support the evidence from excavations and other work in the immediate vicinity. This in turn contributes to the development of our knowledge of the extents of Romano-British rural settlement and associated patterns of land use in this area of the Avon Valley.

Part 2 Detailed report

1. Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

Archaeological fieldwalking was undertaken by the Four Parishes Archaeology Group (4PAG) on land at Wyre Piddle, Worcestershire (NGR SO 9720 4790). The group are funded by a Local Heritage Initiative grant and are undertaking a community project to investigate, interpret and promote the heritage of four parishes, Pinvin, Wyre Piddle, Hill and Moor and Throckmorton. The group is working closely with Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeological Service (the Service) which provides advice and support, including the specialist analysis of the fieldwalking finds reported here.

1.2 Aims

The aim of the fieldwalking was to investigate further the land to the north of an area of previous excavation. This excavation (and prior evaluation), undertaken by the Service in advance of construction of the Wyre Piddle Bypass, revealed evidence of Bronze Age through to Romano-British activity. The fieldwalking undertaken by 4PAG was a

continuation of fieldwalking, undertaken in October 2001. It concentrated on an area to the immediate west of the previous fieldwalk, which in turn was north of a concentration of excavated Iron Age and Romano-British deposits. The character of these was predominantly indicative of field systems and enclosures on the margins of a settlement, although two inhumation burials and some structural features (posts and roundhouse gullies) were present.

Overall the original excavation evidence suggested that the settlement focus lay to the north, in an area not investigated through the programme of fieldwork associated with the construction of the bypass and the 2001 fieldwalk appeared to confirm this model. The specific aim of the 2003 fieldwalking was therefore to provide further evidence for the extents and character of this settlement and support the ongoing work to develop an understanding of the character of former settlement and landuse in this area.

1.3 **Topography and geology**

The site lies on land, which is fairly flat giving way to a gentle upwards slope at the northern extent of the fieldwalked area. The land drains to the south and was under arable cultivation at the time of the fieldwork.

The overlying soils are stagnogleyic argillic brown earths of the Bishampton Series. These are slowly permeable and subject to slight seasonal waterlogging (Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1985 *Soils of the Worcester and Malvern District*, 1:50,000 Series, Sheet **150**). These are mapped as overlying Jurassic Lower Lias (Geological Survey of Great Britain, 1974 *Stratford-upon-Avon*, 1:50,000 Series, Solid and Drift edition, Sheet **200**) which is predominantly clay, however, excavations in the area have revealed pockets of sand and gravel which are probably fluvioglacial in origin.

The fieldwalking has been accessioned onto the County Sites and Monuments Record (reference WSM 33386).

2. **Methods**

2.1 **Fieldwork**

Fieldwalking was coordinated and undertaken on November 22nd 2003 by the Four Parishes Archaeology Group (4PAG). Conditions were poor due to periods of heavy and constant rain. However ground visibility was good with minimal cover.

An area of 4,400m² was covered (Figs 1 and 2). This was fieldwalked on the basis of 20m² grids, using stints and transects which is a more rapid method of prospection in comparison with the method utilized in 2001, where the grids were more intensively searched with 15 minutes of fieldwalking allocated to each grid unit. In comparing fieldwalk methodologies the 2003 method covers only an approximate 10% of the individual grid but still provides adequate material for quantification and analysis. Both fieldwalks were laid out from a baseline running approximately north to south and tied into Ordnance Survey map detail. All artefacts were retrieved by hand and retained in self-seal bags with appropriate locational information written on them.

2.2 **Processing and analysis**

Washing and preliminary sorting of finds was undertaken by members of 4PAG. The quantification, identification, dating and subsequent analysis of the finds assemblage was by Angus Crawford (Finds Archaeologist) from the Service and recorded on a Microsoft Access 2000 database.

Pottery was examined and recorded by fabric type according to the fabric reference series maintained by the Service (Hurst and Rees 1992).

Standard Service methods were used to establish statistically sound ranges when plotting finds distributions (Figs 2 and 3).

3. Description

Most of the material recovered was highly abraded. The assemblage contained a large amount of Roman and post-medieval material, but ranged in date from Roman to modern. A total of 314 sherds of pottery, weighing 2.170 kg were recovered and are commented on below and summarised in Table 1.

Roman

The Roman assemblage consisted of 147 sherds weighing 727g. The most abundant fabric was Severn Valley ware consisting of 143 sherds for 97% of the Roman ceramic assemblage and dating from the mid 1st to 4th century. This high percentage is not particularly unusual, as Severn Valley ware fabrics tend to dominate Roman ceramic assemblages within Worcestershire. Other fabrics belonging to this period were poorly represented with only a single sherd of handmade Malvernian ware, dating from the late Iron Age to the 3rd century and a single sherd of black burnished ware dating from c. AD 120 through to the 4th century. Roman fine wares consisted of a single sherd of imported Gaulish Samian dating from the mid 1st to late 2nd century.

The small size and highly abraded condition of the sherds meant that it was impossible to identify ceramic forms that could help establish more precise dates. While the fabric types are representative for the whole of the Roman period the fabric assemblage is indicative of a rural settlement assemblage.

Fabric	Fabric Name	Total	Weight (g)	Date range
22	Black burnished ware	1	6	120-4 th Century
12	Severn Valley ware	143	695	Mid 1 st -4 th Century
3	Malvernian metamorphic	1	16	Late IA- 3 rd Century
43	Samian	1	5	Mid 1 st -late 2 nd Century
98	Miscellaneous Roman wares	1	5	Mid 1 st -4 th Century
56	Malvernian unglazed ware	1	9	12 th -14 th Century
99	Miscellaneous medieval wares	2	9	1066-1550
69	Oxidised glazed Malvernian ware	3	34	Late 13 th -early 17 th Cent.
69/78	Uncertain	1	24	17 th -18 th Century
78	Post-medieval red ware	94	897	17 th -18 th Century
78/100	Uncertain	10	83	17 th -18 th Century
100	Miscellaneous post medieval ware	6	30	17 th -18 th Century
90	Post-medieval orange ware	5	61	17 th -18 th Century
91	Post-medieval buff ware	15	166	17 th -18 th Century
84	Creamware	5	15	1750-1780
83	Porcelain	5	22	Mid 18 th onwards
81.4	Miscellaneous late stoneware	6	71	1850 onwards
85	Modern stone china	7	15	1850 onwards
101	Miscellaneous modern ware	7	14	1850 onwards
	Total	314	2.170 Kg	

Table 1: Summary of pottery fabrics

Medieval

Only one sherd of pottery was identified as medieval. This was a sherd of unglazed Malvernian ware. While this fabric is broadly dated to the late 12th to 14th century the majority of finds associated with this fabric date to the 13th century.

Post-medieval/modern

The post-medieval/modern assemblage consisted of 143 sherds weighing 1.44 kg. The most common fabrics were post-medieval red sandy, orange and buff wares. Other fabrics included modern stone china, porcelain and miscellaneous late stonewares. These fabric types are typical found within rural field walk assemblages and are the result of the fertilizing of fields with midden material, containing domestic household detritus, in the post-medieval and early modern period.

Other finds dating to this period included ceramic field drain fragments, fragments of brick and roof tile, animal bone, claypipe fragments and vessel glass.

4. Discussion

A distribution of the Roman pottery is presented in Figure 2. In analysing the assemblage distribution and in comparing it against previous fieldwalk results caution must be taken in interpreting the results due to differing methods of artefact recovery utilised in 2001 and 2003 (as reported above in 2.1 Fieldwalk methodology). While the 2003 methodology recovers a smaller quantity of finds this material is still representative of the site assemblage and areas of potential archaeological activity can be identified. With this taken into consideration some interesting distribution patterns were noted. Previous field walking in 2001 identified a concentration of scattered sherds along the west side of the fieldwalked area (Fig 2). This concentration has been confirmed and the extent defined with the second phase of fieldwalking covered by this report. The second phase has also revealed another concentrated scatter along the northern boundary bordering the area of made ground. This suggests another potential focus of settlement activity in that area. Interestingly an analysis of burnt/fire cracked stone deposition showed a similar distribution with the Roman pottery scatter to the north and a further correspondence with a less intensive scatter in the south-west (Fig 3). This may represent evidence for the earlier Iron Age tradition of using heated stones to boil water, most likely for food processing, carrying through into early Romano-British phases of occupation. Importantly this potentially demonstrates an overlapping of material cultural practises, the one native and the other of Roman influence.

Overall the pottery scatters can be interpreted as reflecting the presence of Romano-British rural settlement, probably a farmstead. There is also the possibility of low level industrial or craft production in the north-eastern area of the site as identified in by Darch and Jackson in 2001.

This supports the evidence from the bypass excavations, which had revealed ditches and other deposits indicative of field boundaries, enclosures and activity at the periphery of an Iron Age and Romano-British settlement. In addition, since completion of the fieldwalking, further excavation in advance of development of an area to the immediate east has revealed Roman occupation (dated to the 3rd to 4th centuries) focussed on several small enclosures (Vaughan 2005). The latter clearly extends westwards beyond the confines of the excavation, supporting the evidence from the fieldwalking for settlement of this period at this location. Lastly, salvage recording associated with the laying of a pipeline across the fieldwalked area has revealed a major enclosure ditch of Romano-British date within the fieldwalked area (Goad and Darch 2002).

The evidence from the fieldwalking, therefore, supports that from excavation and other fieldwork in the area. Together these are revealing a well preserved and intensively used later prehistoric and Romano-British landscape and settlement pattern in an area which had previously been little researched, and which had been assumed to have only limited former occupation with poor survival of archaeological deposits.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Processing and analysis

Overall the processing of finds material carried out by 4PAG was completed to a high standard. Finds bags were generally clearly labelled and individual finds marked accordingly. There were only two identified areas that require some consideration and attention. Some finds bags had been marked on the reverse side rather than the front where the bags are white coated to act as a label. While this may sound trivial the coated surface provides a background to make marking distinct. When the bags are filled with material, if the white surface is not used, it becomes difficult to read the labels and therefore identify material and associated grids or contexts. A simple method in identifying the correct surface is that the coated surface is slightly rough to the touch.

The second area was with the drying of animal bones. If material is not dried fully prior to being placed in an airtight plastic bag it will 'sweat' out the moisture that it still retains. In this case several bags of animal bones had sweated causing the further decomposition of the material and encouraged bacterial decay and mould growth. A simple remedy is to pierce the bags, containing any porous material, with a series of small holes to allow evaporation of any retained moisture.

5.2 Future work

The fieldwalking reported here has produced useful results that supplement and support those from a range of other work in the immediate vicinity. However, two principal areas can be identified for future research:

1. The nature of the occupation – The fieldwalking data has provided important information relating to the extents of the site through identification of concentrations of pottery and burnt/fire-cracked stone. This has also provided datable material consistent with that of a typical Romano-British rural settlement with the ceramic assemblage dominated by locally produced wares. Evidence of late Iron Age to late Romano-British farmsteads was previously revealed during salvage excavation prior to the construction of the bypass. The evidence recovered at that time suggested that the main focus of settlement during those periods was located in the regions covered by the fieldwalks in 2001 and 2003. Confirmation has been provided by the analysis of the material recovered from these fieldwalks, and the distinct concentrations of Romano-British settlement activity identified warrant further archaeological investigation. As geophysical survey was successfully applied on both the stretch of the bypass to the south and on the area to the east, it is recommended that this method be used within the fieldwalked area to assist in defining the layout and extents of the settlement. In addition, geophysical survey has a high potential to reveal further evidence of Bronze Age and Middle Iron Age enclosures known to lie to the west, fieldwalking of which is unlikely to yield good results owing to the paucity of material evidence from deposits of these periods.
2. The extents of settlement/activity – An area of the field between the 2001 and 2003 fieldwalks was only rapidly swept for finds in 2001 (see Fig 2). Immediately to the east of this area high densities of Roman pottery were identified. It is recommended that this area be fieldwalked by grid to establish more accurately the extent of this Roman

material. Further, no fieldwalking has been undertaken to the south of these areas and south of the bypass. Fieldwalking of this area would further define the southern limits of the extents of former activity.

6. **Publication summary**

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

Archaeological fieldwalking was undertaken by the Four Parishes Archaeology Group (4PAG) on land at Wyre Piddle, Worcestershire (NGR SO 9720 4790) as part of a Local Heritage Initiative scheme. A scatter of Romano-British pottery and other finds of mid 1st to 4th century date were recovered. The full extent of the pottery scatter was not established, however, analysis indicates the presence of a Romano-British settlement with a domestic focus and possibly an industrial or craft production area to its north. This supports the evidence from excavations and other work in the immediate vicinity and will contribute to the development of an understanding of the extents of Romano-British settlement and patterns of landuse in this part of the Avon Valley.

7. **The archive**

The archive consists of:

- 1 Base map
- 11 Boxes of finds
- 1 Computer disk
- 1 Report

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum
Hartlebury Castle
Hartlebury
Near Kidderminster
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ
Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416

8. **Acknowledgements**

The fieldwork was undertaken by 4PAG. Reporting and analysis were undertaken by Angus Crawford (Finds Archaeologist) with the assistance of Robin Jackson (Project Manager). Illustrations were undertaken by Carolyn Hunt (Illustrator) and the report edited by Robin Jackson (Project Manager).

Members of 4PAG undertook the fieldwalking and preliminary processing of finds.

Mr and Mrs E Massingham kindly allowed access to their land for the fieldwalking.

9. **Bibliography**

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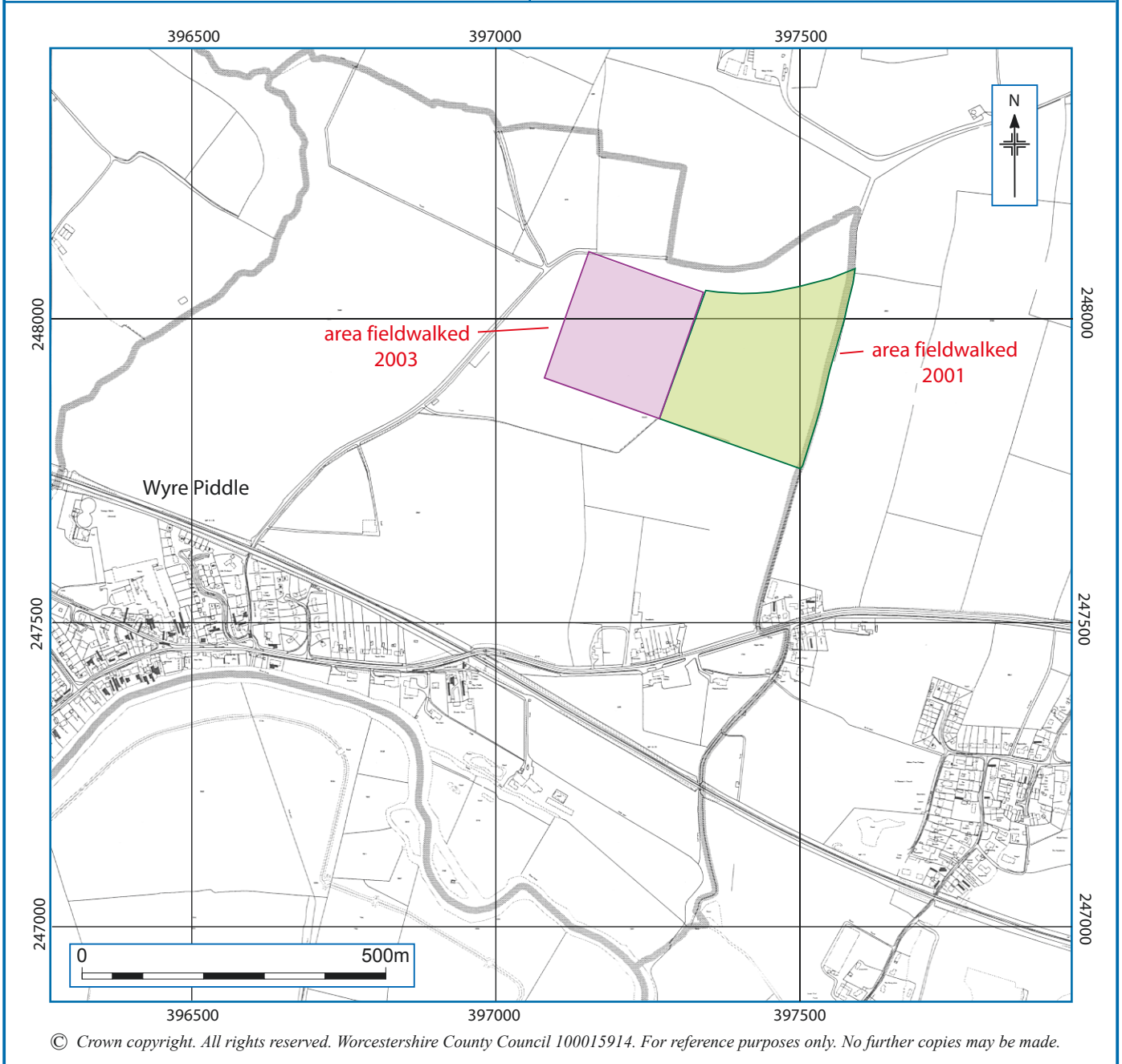
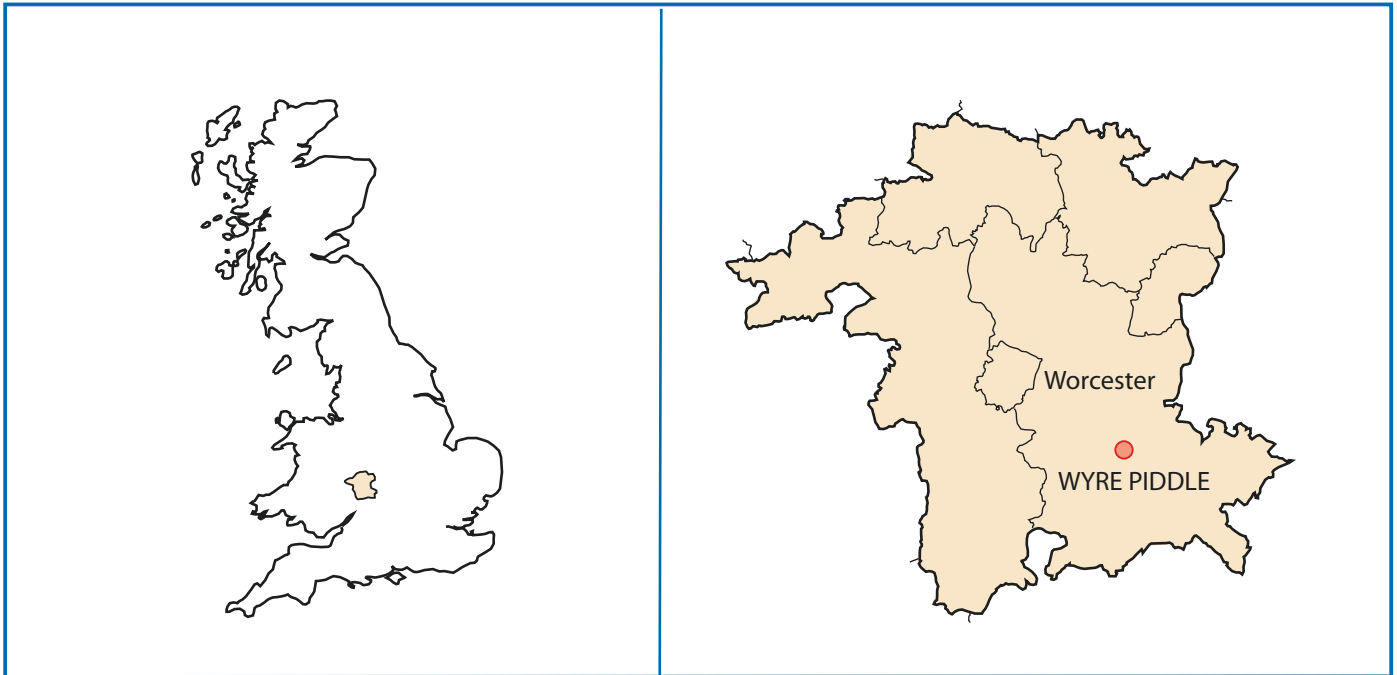
Tyers, P, 1996 *Roman Pottery in Britain*, Batsford, London

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10. **Abbreviations**

WSM Numbers prefixed with 'WSM' are the primary reference numbers used by the Worcestershire County Sites and Monuments Record.

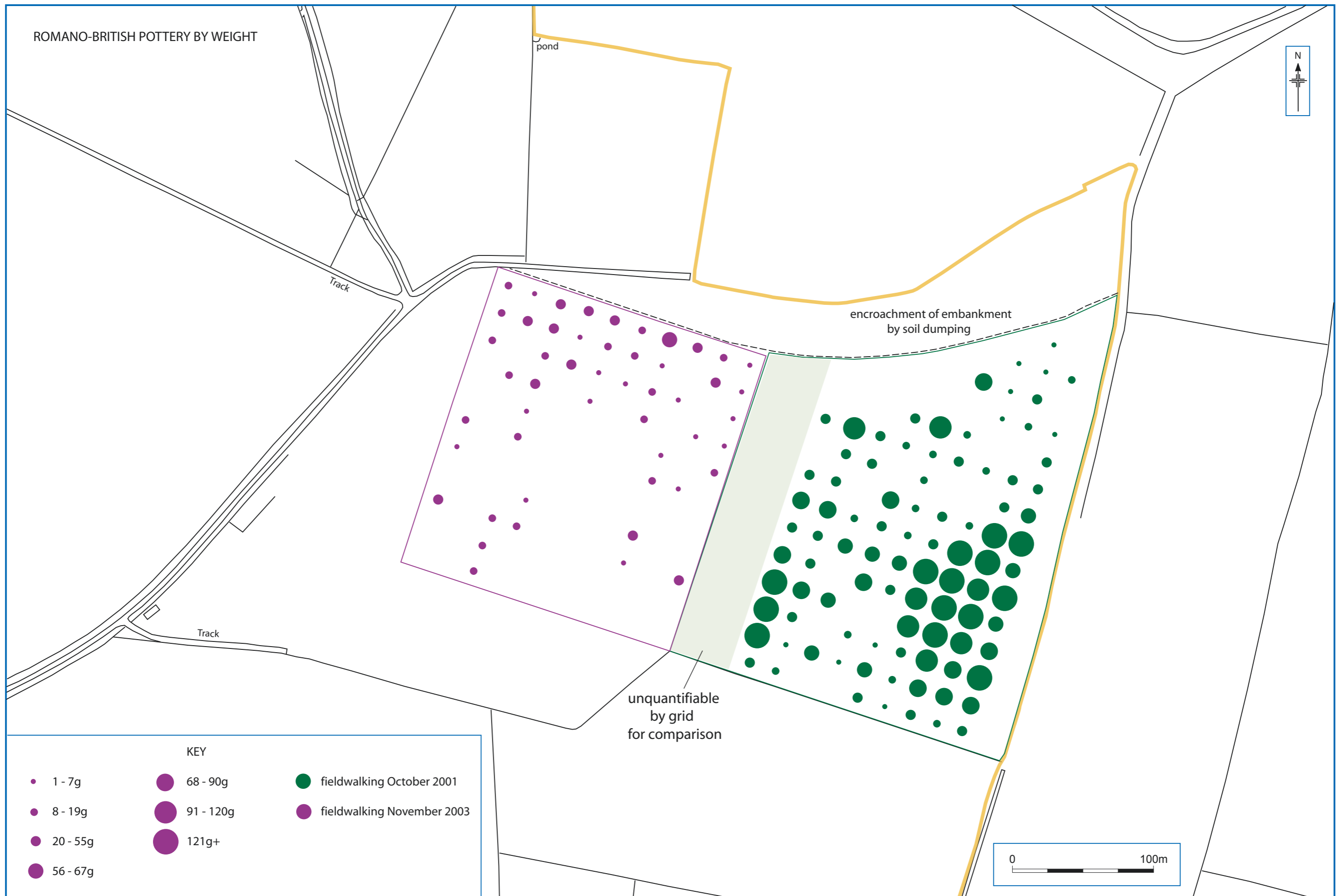
SMR Sites and Monuments Record.



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Location of the site.

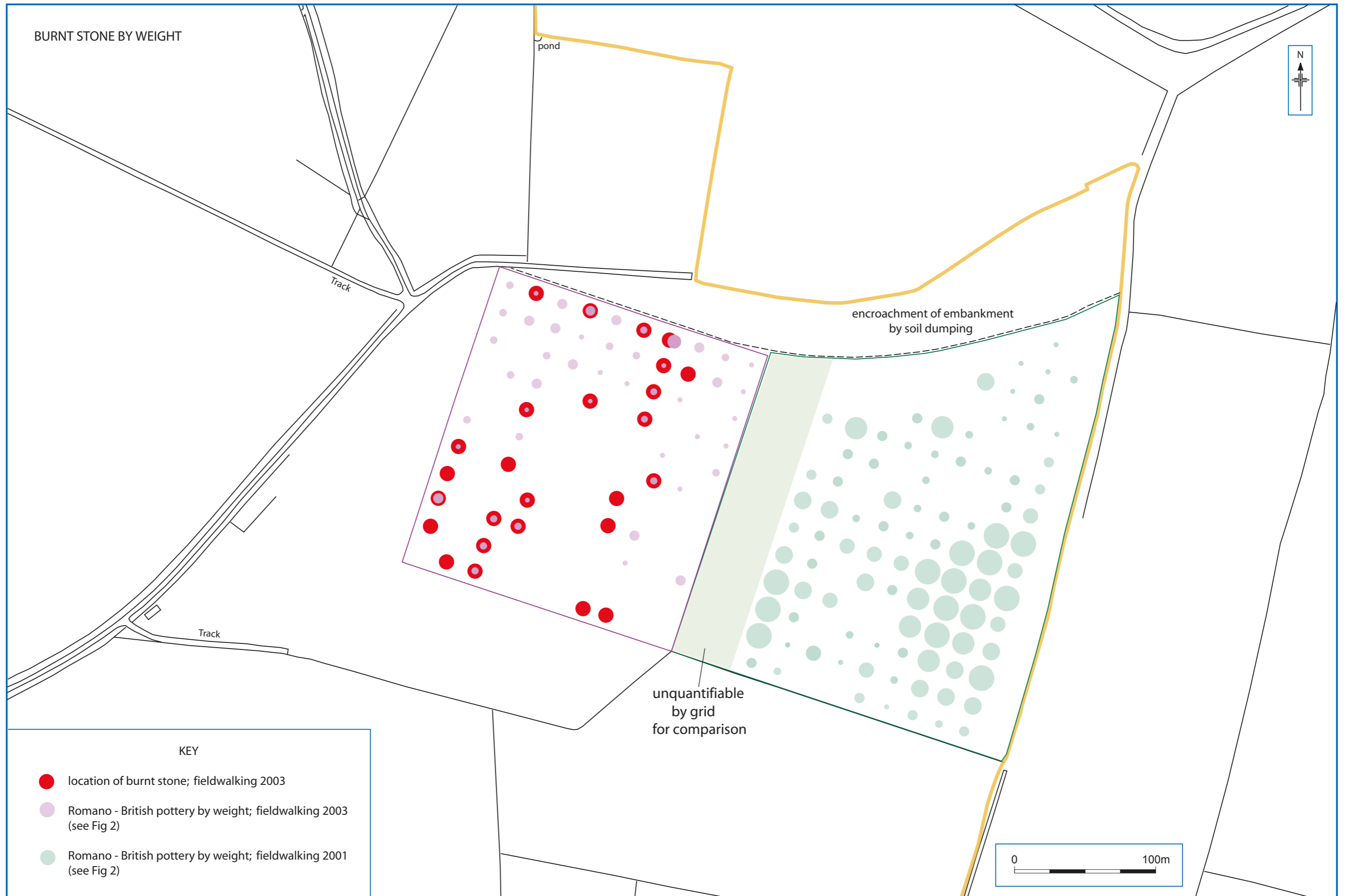
Figure 1



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Distribution of Romano-British pottery (by weight)

Figure 2



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Distribution of burnt stone

Figure 3