# Community Fieldwalking Exercise at Mitchells Field, Covington Cambridgeshire





August 2015

OA East Report No: 1725 OASIS No: oxfordar3-220641 NGR: TL 05680 71121



# Community Fieldwalking Exercise at Mitchells Field, Covington, Cambridgeshire

Archaeological Fieldwalking Survey Report

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Report Date: August 2015



Report Number:	1725		
Site Name:	Mitchells Field, Covington		
HER Event No:	ECB4352		
Date of Works:	September 2014		
Client Name:	Covington History Group/Jigsaw		
Client Ref:	N/A		
Planning Ref:	N/A		
Grid Ref:	TL 05680 71121		
Site Code:	COVMIT14		
Finance Code:	CAMJIGOUT		
Receiving Body:	Covington History Group		
Accession No:	N/A		
Prepared by: Position: Date:	Jemima Woolverton Jigsaw Community Archaeologist 14/8/15		
Checked by: Position: Date: Signed:	14/8/15 Stephen Macaulay Jigsaw Project Manager 21/8/15		

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#### Summary

A fieldwalking exercise was conducted on Saturday 20th September 2014 at Mitchells Field Covington as a Jigsaw Cambridgeshire training course for volunteers. Medieval and post-medieval ceramic building material (CBM) was recovered, particularly from the north-eastern part of the site. Medieval and postmedieval pottery was also found scattered across the site, along with one confirmed piece of Roman pottery. Other finds include a gun-flint and various metal objects along with fragments of clay-pipe, slate, glass and slag: all of probable postmedieval to modern date.





# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 An archaeological fieldwalking exercise was conducted at Mitchells Field, Mickle Hill, Covington, Huntingdon (TL 0568 7112; Fig. 1). The fieldwalking was conducted as part of a Jigsaw Cambridgeshire public training course.
- 1.1.2 The work was designed to train volunteers in the Jigsaw Cambridgeshire community from across the county in fieldwalking methodology, and assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains in the field. The Covington History Group has been conducting fieldwalking, geophysical and testpitting surveys across the parish over the past three years; this field was targeted for survey because it had not been previously fieldwalked but was adjacent to a known moated site.
- 1.1.3 The site archive is currently held by Oxford Archaeology East (OA East) and will be deposited with the Covington History Group.

## 1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 Mitchells Field is to the north-west of the current village, and lies on a sedimentary bedrock of Oxford Clay overlain by Oadby Member – Diamicton (http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html). The field, which lies at an elevation of *c*.79m OD, has been cultivated since the medieval period, and is currently arable farmland (Parsons pers. comm.).

## **1.3** Archaeological and historical background

#### Roman (c. AD43-410)

- 1.3.1 Roman pottery and metalwork has been found in the fields to the east and north of the site, while magnetometry geophysical surveys have revealed Roman and Iron Age field systems (CHER 05575), some of which were trial-trenched in 2014 (Parsons *et al.* 2015). Metal detecting finds support the view that people lived in the area in Roman times, particularly the 3rd and 4th centuries AD (Parsons *et al.* 2013).
- 1.3.2 No evidence of Roman occupation has been found in Mitchells field.

#### Medieval (c. AD1066-1500)

- 1.3.3 In medieval times the field was divided into furlongs and cultivated (Parsons pers. comm.). A foot-road to Keyston skirted the southern half of the field, with a later foot-road largely following the line of the current footpath which bisects the field in two places (Parsons pers. comm.).
- 1.3.4 A medieval double moated site known as Bovetune or Moat/Mote Close survives in the woodland and field to the east of the site (Fig. 1), and previously visible earthworks in the field were ploughed out and backfilled in living memory by the previous landowner (CHER 00315). The name 'Bovetune' may refer to a manor or farm belonging to Nicholas de Bovetune (listed in Victoria County History), or could simply refer to the semantic meaning 'above the town' (Page *et al.* 1936, 36). The manor was divided between two knights in 1086, so this could have been one of the farms. Alternatively the moats could have been stock enclosures.
- 1.3.5 A testpit was excavated next to one of the moats in the wooded area in 2012 (ECB 4382) to ascertain whether the moat had extended further west than its present



location, but this proved conclusively that it had not (Parsons et al. 2013, 2). Resistivity and magnetometry geophysical surveys of the moated site remains in the field were conducted in 2013 by Covington History Group. Bovetune field was excavated by Covington History Group in 2013 by placing strategic trenches across moated areas highlighted by the geophysical survey (COVTP13; ECB 4351). The moats were deliberately puddled (lined), and some were 1.5m deep, with an unusual absence of dating material (Parsons pers. comm.).

- 1.3.6 There is a second putative medieval moat or fishponds at The Manor house to the south-east of the village (CHER 00313). The church of All Saints, located to the south-west of Mitchells Field, dates to the 12th century (CHER 10564).
- 1.3.7 A Jigsaw training dig (COVMAF15) uncovered extensive medieval activity in Manor Field (Woolverton et al. forthcoming).

#### Post-Medieval (c. AD1500-1900)

1.3.8 The population of Covington peaked at 240 people in the early 1800s, but has since declined (Parsons et al. 2013, 2). Land was enclosed by the Duke of Manchester from 1764, and again following the Enclosure Act of 1801 (Parsons et al. 2013, 2). Several houses dating to the 17th and 18th centuries still survive (Parsons *et al.* 2013, 2)

#### 1.4 Acknowledgements

1.4.1 The author would like to thank the participants of the training course for their enthusiasm and commitment to fieldwalking on a drizzly day, and the hospitality of Covington History Group and Covington Amenities Committee, who provided the village hall. Also thanks to Mary-Ann Parsons for archaeological and historical details about the village, and to Simon Parsons for the geophysical survey data.



2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

## 2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The objective of this fieldwalking exercise was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the area. This site was chosen because it had not been previously fieldwalked and was thus interesting to the local archaeology group, and it was hoped that its location adjacent to the putative medieval moated site would shed further light on the function and date of this and other moats in the village.

#### 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 Jigsaw fieldwalking methodology was employed: systematic walking of 20 square metre grids by volunteers over a fixed period of time, with all the finds from each grid square bagged together (rather than pinpointed locations within grids). Participants were encouraged to cover a grid square in 15 minutes to collect a representative sample, although some took longer (Plates 3 and 4). The whole field was not walked, instead a fieldwalking grid divided into 15 squares measuring in total 100m x 60m, aligned north-east to south-west, was laid out along the present field boundary (Figs 1 and 2).
- 2.2.2 The grid points were plotted on a site plan using a hand-held GPS with a 1-3m accuracy. Finds were analysed and recorded by the finds specialists at OA East.
- 2.2.3 The conditions were grey and drizzly, with the ground a little soft underfoot.



# 3 RESULTS

# 3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The collected finds are listed by grid square in Appendix A, and the distribution of pottery and tile by period and quantity are shown on Figure 2. Full finds identification is included in Appendices B and C.

## 3.2 Results

- 3.2.1 A selection of post-medieval and modern metalwork and glass was recovered, with most of the latter relating to the continuous agricultural use of the field. Other finds, with no particular concentrations, include fragments of clay-pipe, slate, slag and a single oyster shell; all consistent with manuring.
- 3.2.2 There is one confirmed sherd of Roman pottery (a Nene-valley mortarium fragment), along with a few other sherds that may also be Roman in date. The pottery is, however, predominantly post-medieval and modern in date, although there is a notable quantity of medieval pottery mostly locally-produced shellywares (Plate 1).
- 3.2.3 Fragments of late post-medieval brick and drain were also recovered. Tile dating from medieval to modern periods was found across the field, with concentrations of medieval to early post-medieval tile being found in the north-east of the grid.
- 3.2.4 A single gun-flint was recovered from outside the gridded area (Plate 2).



# 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

#### 4.1 Roman

4.1.1 Since only one confirmed sherd was recovered, it seems unlikely that there was a Roman presence in this part of the field.

#### 4.2 Medieval

4.2.1 The quantities of medieval pottery (*c*.19 sherds; mostly locally-produced wares) and tile corroborate with the hypothesis that there was a medieval site nearby, and that the land has been farmed since the medieval period. If the spread of finds relates to the medieval moated site of Bovetune (see Section 1.3.3; Fig. 1), the fieldwalking results may suggest that this wasn't a particularly high-status site.

#### 4.3 Post-medieval

4.3.1 Most finds date to the post-medieval periods and none of these seem to relate to any nearby structures, as no dwellings are marked on historic maps of this field. This is a typical fieldwalking assemblage and probably largely represents manuring scatters and objects related to agriculture.

#### 4.4 Significance

- 4.4.1 The relatively high concentrations of medieval and post-medieval tile in squares A4 and A5 may be partly due to over-zealous collection. However, since there were also high concentrations of tile in B4, B5 and C5, it seems likely that a higher density of finds is indeed present in the north-east part of the fieldwalked area.
- 4.4.2 The quantities of finds seem to dovetail well with the historical evidence which suggests that this field has been in cultivation since the medieval period (and possibly earlier).

#### 4.5 Recommendations

4.5.1 This fieldwalking survey has not substantially improved the understanding of the function or date of the Bovetune moats, although it has recovered medieval to post-medieval pottery and tile that may derive from a nearby settlement area. An extended fieldwalking survey and a geophysical survey of the field would shed further light on land use through time. Further excavation of the Bovetune site in particular may also uncover dating evidence and other remains relating to the use of this field during the medieval period.



# APPENDIX A. FINDS INVENTORY FROM FIELDWALKING GRIDS

General des	cription	Orientation	NNE-SSW
Each grid measured 20m <sup>2</sup> .		Width (m)	60
		Length (m)	100
Grid no	Finds	Comment	
A1	brick, drain, glass, pot, clay pipe, metalwork		
A2	brick, tile, drain, glass, pot, metalwork		
A3	brick, tile, drain, pot, slate		
A4	brick, tile, drain, pot, slag, metalwork		
A5	brick, tile, drain, pot, slate		
B1	brick, drain, glass, pot, slate		
B2	brick, tile, drain, glass, pot, metalwork		
B3	brick, pot		
B4	brick, tile, pot		
B5	brick, tile, pot		
C1	brick, tile, drain, glass, pot, metalwork, slate		
C2	brick, tile, drain, glass, pot, slate		
C3	brick, tile, drain, pot, slag		
C4	brick, tile,		
C5	brick, tile, pot, shell		
Un-gridded	pot, gun-flint		



# APPENDIX B. FINDS REPORTS

## **B.1 Metalwork**

#### By James Fairbairn

B.1.1 Archaeological works recovered 12 pieces of metalwork, mostly ferrous, weighing 0.635kg. Five pieces were unidentifiable.

Grid no	Description	Date	
A1	1x gate hinge bracket. 3 x unidentifiable ferrous artefacts. 1 x iron cog.	19th century and later	
A2	1 x nail, 1 x unidentifiable ferrous artefact.		
A4	1 x unidentifiable ferrous artefact.		
B2	button	18-19th century	
C1	1 x tiehook (18-19th century), 1 x modern alloy pipe, 1 x 19th century double-eyed pressed button	18th century and later	

Table 1: Metalwork

#### **B.2 Metalworking waste**

B.2.1 Two pieces of undiagnostic slag were recovered from A4 and C3, possibly relating to ironworking.

#### B.3 Glass

Grid no	Description	Date
A1	2 thick window safety glass, 1 clear colourless bottle, 1 thin window, 1 moulded bottle C19/20th, 1 dark olive green glass, 1 green glass, 1 blue glass C19th.	19th century and later
A2	1 clear glass base, 1 bottle glass, 4 natural black glass	19th century and later
B1	1 white bottle base (for cream?), 1 thick window glass, 4 clear blue tinted C19th onwards, 1 frosted botted C19th onwards, 1 olive/natural black	19th century and later
B2	1 clear colourless bottle, 1 thick irrdescent blue/gleen/clear soda bottle from C19th, 1 thick window safety glass	19th century and later
C1	1 olive/natural black bottle rim C19th, 1 green bottle, 1 colourless clear rim, 2 abraded C19th ?medicine bottle, 1 pink ?glass oil lamp	19th century and later
C2	1 clear window glass	

Table 2: Glass



# **B.4 Pottery**

By Carole Fletcher, quantified by Jemima Woolverton

# Introduction and methodology

B.4.1 Fieldwalking recovered 97 sherds weighing 0.835kg.

Grid no	Fabric	Basic Form	Sherd Count	Weight (kg)	Pottery Date Range	
A1	Northants? Shellyware. Undiagnostic		1	0.013	Medieval/ possibly Roman	
	Post-medieval black glazed ware		4	0.108	Post-medieval	
	Post-medieval redware		1	0.019	Post-medieval	
	Yellowware with cream slip		1	0.017	Post-medieval (later mould)	
	Pearlware, transfer- printed		4	0.004		
	White English Stoneware		1	0.001	17th – 19th century	
A2	Lyveden shellyware		2	0.008	13th century	
	Early medieval sandyware		1	0.001	early Med	
	Plantpot		2	0.018		
	Black Staffordshire slipwares		4	0.07	Post-medieval	
	Post-medieval black glazed ware		2	0.019	Post-medieval	
	cream kitchen ware		1	0.033		
	Post-medieval redware		1	0.007	Post-medieval	
	Pearlware, transfer- printed		5	0.008		
	Bone china		1	0.001		
A3	Pearlware with transfer- printed image of a person		1	0.001		
A4	Pearlware	1x shell-edged plate	2	0.001		
	Post-medieval black glazed ware (Staffordshire style)		1	0.001		
	Post-medieval redware		1	0.012	Post-medieval	
	Shellyware		1	0.006	Possibly Roman, or Medieval	
	Cistercian-type ware		1	0.001		



Grid no	Fabric	Basic Form	Sherd Count	Weight (kg)	Pottery Date Range	
A5	Plantpot		2	0.02		
	Hard-fired black glazed wares		2	0.023	Post-medieval	
	Bone china/porcelain		1	0.001		
	Refined white earthernware		1	0.001		
	Sandyware (abraded)		1	0.001	?Roman	
	Lyveden (green glaze)		1	0.001	Medieval	
	Shellyware	strap handle	1	0.013	Medieval	
	Shellyware	rim of jar	1	0.017	Medieval/? Roman	
B1	English stoneware	paste jar	1	0.015	C18th	
	Pearlware		3	0.005		
	Refined white earthernware		2	0.004		
	Post-medieval black glazed ware		4	0.043	Post-medieval	
B2	Black glazed ware		4	0.1	late post- medieval	
	shelly ware		3	0.005	unknown	
	bone china		1	0.001		
B3	Black glazed ware		1	0.011	post-medieval	
	shellyware	rim, body (Lyveden-type), body (early)	3	0.027	Medieval	
B4	Pearlware/refined white earthernware		1	0.003		
B5	Staffordshire slipware (clear glaze)		1	0.006		
C1	Post-medieval black glazed ware	bowl	3	0.036	Post-medieval	
	Post-medieval redware		1	0.001	Post-medieval	
	Midland Purple		1	0.016	Post-medieval	
	English stoneware (Notts/Derbs)		1	0.009	Post-medieval	
	Pearlware. 1 is green sponged		9	0.009		
C2	Shellyware	1 rim	2	0.008	Medieval	
	English stoneware – Notts/Derbs		1	0.01		
C3	Post-medieval black glazed ware. ?		1	0.057	Post-medieval	



Grid no	Fabric	Basic Form	Sherd Count	Weight (kg)	Pottery Date Range
	Staffordshire				
C5	Post-medieval redware		1	0.014	Post-medieval
Non-strat	Medieval	undiagnostic	1	0.014	Medieval
	Post-medieval black glazed ware	big jar	1	0.035	Post-medieval
	Shellyware		1	0.008	
	Roman Nene valley mortarium		1	0.027	Roman
	Yelloware	mixing bowl	1	0.008	

Table 3: Pottery

# B.5 Clay pipe

By Carole Fletcher, quantified by Jemima Woolverton

B.5.1 Fieldwalking produced a small assemblage of clay tobacco pipe: 0.001kg.

Grid no	Description	Number of Stems	Weight (kg)	Date Range
A1	undiagnostic	1	0.001	unknown (post- medieval)

Table 4: Clay pipes

## **B.6 Building stone**

By Carole Fletcher BA

B.6.1 Several small fragments of slate were recovered from squares A3, A5, B1, C1 and C2. The majority is Welsh roofing slate, dating to the 19th century and onwards. One piece has a nail hole.

## **B.7 Worked flint**

B.7.1 A single gun-flint weighing 0.003kg was recovered from outside of the gridded area.

# **B.8 Ceramic building material (CBM)**

By Rob Atkins

#### Introduction

B.8.1 A small assemblage of CBM (275 fragments; 4.603kg) was recovered from fieldwalking (Table 5). The CBM has been divided into brick (including undiagnostic scraps: some of which could be drain or tile fragments), tile and drain.



Туре	No. of CBM	Weight (g)
Brick and scraps	141	2138
Tile	113	2054
Drain	21	411
Total	275	4603

Table 5: CBM by number and weight

#### Brick

B.8.2 Brick including scraps were found in all fieldwalking areas (Table 6). All fragments are heavily abraded with no lengths, widths or even thicknesses surviving. Most fragments are undiagnostic. The minority could be roughly dated and all seem to be later post-medieval or later in date (18th century+). It is recommended that the brick be discarded.

Grid no	No	Wt (g)	
A1	2	53	One perforated Early/Mid 19th century + and one modern machine made 20th century
A2	20	282	Two/three perforated brick – Early/Mid 19th century +. Other fragments? brick – undiagnostic
A3	4	63	Scraps
A4	3	285	Two are later post-med; one undiagnostic
A5	59	630	Sixteen fragments (513g) definitely brick. Two perforated – Early/Mid 19th century +. Two yellow/red mixed post-med bricks. One well made orange with slight grey core – mid 18th- early 19th century. Others undiagnostic. Forty-three scraps? brick (117g)
B1	1	156	Perforated – early/Mid 19th century +
B2	8	107	One perforated -early/Mid 19th century +; two? 18th-early 19th; others?
B3	2	4	?
B4	2	74	? All post-med
B5	13	40	Three? post-med; 10 scraps
C1	9	296	Three perforated- early/mid 19th century +; remainder post-medieval +; six scraps (13g)
C2	6	38	One perforated'; remainder are? post-med +
C3	5	88	All post-med+ or undiagnostic
C4	2	10	?brick
C5	5	12	?brick
Total	141	2138	

Table 6: Brick by fieldwalking area



#### Tile

B.8.3 A moderate quantity of tile was found across the site and dates from the medieval to modern periods (Table 7). There was a 'concentration' of medieval and early post-medieval fragments in specific locations (A4, A5, B4, B5 and C5).

Grid no	No	Wt (g)	
A2	2	34	Hard orange fully oxidised – post-medieval 16th-18th centuries. One
A3	1	15	Post-med orange oxidised tile
A4	13	217	In four fabrics: A) Three yellow/orange mixed (56g) B) One yellow with grey core (13g). medieval C) Two orange with grey core (16g) ?Medieval D) Seven fully oxidised orange (132g). Could be sub-divided further. Late med and post-medieval examples.
A5	32	531	In Six fabrics: A) Six orange with grey core (117g) Lime mortar on one. ?Medieval B) Two Yellow with grey core (25g) Medieval C) One orange with small yellow clay lump inclusions (8g)? medieval D) One orange and yellow clay mixed (10g) E) Eighteen fully oxidised orange (282g) Could be sub-divided. Mortar on two. Mixture of Late med and post-medieval examples. F) Four fully oxidised yellow (89g)
B2	5	112	In two fabrics: A) Three yellow (55g) Post-med B) Two orange (57g) Post-med
B4	8	173	In four fabrics: A) One yellow/red mixed (23g) B) One orange with gey core (9g) C) Two orange/yellow mixed (37g) D) Four orange (114g) All late med or early post-med
B5	19	357	In three fabrics: A) Five yellow/orange mixed (108g) B) Six orange with grey core (201g) C) Eight orange fully oxidised (148g) Mixture of medieval and post-medieval
C1	8	171	In three fabrics: 1) Three machine made orange (93g) 20th century B) Four orange (72g) C) One yellow (6g)
C2	9	163	In three fabrics: A) Two machine made orange (51g) 20th century B) One machine made purple (55g) 20th century C) Six orange (57g)? all post-med
C3	3	41	In two fabrics: A) Two yellow (34g) B) One orange (7g)
C4	3	90	Orange. Two are 18th century+; One late med/early post-med
C5	10	150	In four fabrics: A) One orange with grey core (3g)



Grid no	No	Wt (g)	
			B) One yellow with grey core (8g) C) One yellow/orange (15g) D) Seven orange (124g) Mixture of med and post-med
	113	2054	

Table 7: Tile by fieldwalking area

#### Drain

B.8.4 Drain fragments were found across the area (Table 8). Most appears to date to the late 18th or 19th centuries. It is recommended that the drain be discarded.

Grid no	No	Wt (g)	
A1	5	94	19th century +
A2	1	15	Ceramic drain? late 18th century +
A3	2	21	?drain
A4	1	3	
A5	2	29	Two drain? One with grey core.
B1	1	55	
B2	1	21	
C1	6	162	
C2	1	7	
C3	1	4	?drain
	21	411	

Table 8: Drain by fieldwalking area

#### Recommendations

B.8.5 No further work is required on this assemblage, which can be discarded (with the exception of some of the Medieval tile, if required).

APPENDIX C. ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS

# C.1 Mollusca

By Carole Fletcher

C.1.1 A single oyster shell was recovered from C5, weighing 0.001kg.



# APPENDIX D. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Parsons, MA. and Woolverton, J.	2013	Covington Big Dig 8-10 June 2012
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Page, W., Proby, G., and Inskip Ladds, S. (eds)	1936	A History of the County of Huntingdon: Volume 3. London
Woolverton, J. et al. (forthcoming)	2015	Nobles and peasants: a medieval village history uncovered by the Jigsaw Training Dig

# Web pages

http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html



# APPENDIX E. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

Project Details								
OASIS Number								
Project Name								
Project Dates (fieldwork	) Start			Finish				
Previous Work (by OA E	East)			Future	Work			
Project Reference Code	· [							
Site Code					Planning App. No.			
HER No.			Related HER/OASIS No.					
			I Celateu I		0.			
Type of Project/Technic Prompt	ques Usec	1						
Development Type								
Please select all techn	iques use	ed:						
Aerial Photography - interp	retation	Grab-Sa	mpling		Rem	note Operated Vehicle Survey		
Aerial Photography - new		Gravity-C	Core		🗌 Sam	ple Trenches		
Annotated Sketch		Laser Sc	anning		Surv Surv	vey/Recording Of Fabric/Structure		
		Measured Survey			Targ	Targeted Trenches		
Dendrochronological Surve	ey	Metal Detectors			Test Pits			
Documentary Search		Phosphate Survey				Topographic Survey		
Environmental Sampling		Photogrammetric Survey Vibro-core						
Fieldwalking		Photographic Survey Visual Inspection (Initial Site Visit)			al Inspection (Initial Site Visit)			
Geophysical Survey		Rectified	Rectified Photography					
Monument Types/Sign List feature types using the N Thesaurus together with th	MR Monu	ument Type	e Thesaur	-		ng the MDA Object type		
Monument	Period		O	oject		Period		
	]							
	]							
Project Location								
County			Sit	e Address (in	cluding p	postcode if possible)		
District								
Parish								
HER								
			<b>.</b> .		- <b>f</b>			
Study Area			Na	ational Grid R	ererence			



# **Project Originators**

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Project Brief Originator	
Project Design Originator	
Project Manager	
Supervisor	
Drainat Arabiran	

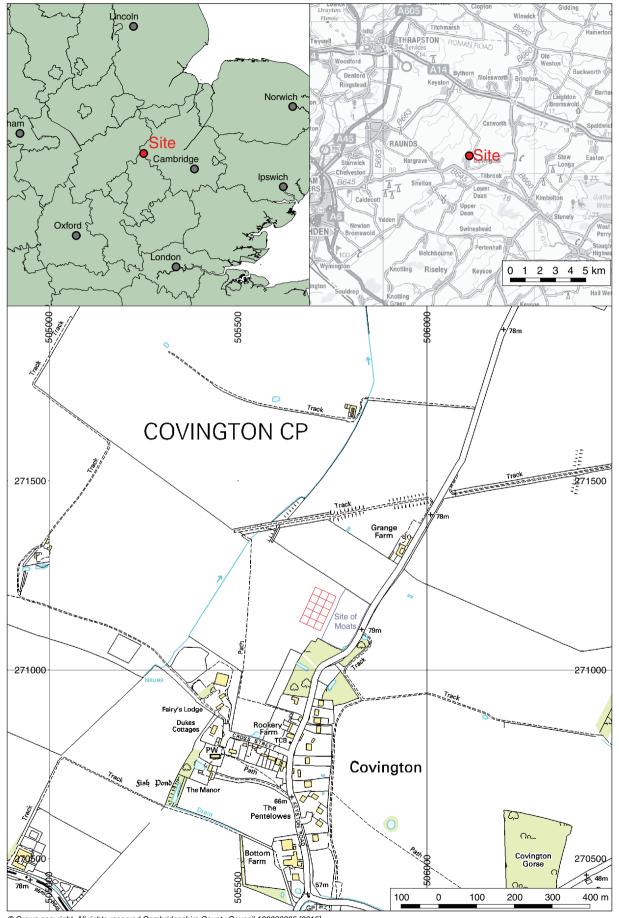
#### **Project Archives**

Physical Archive	Digital Archive	Paper Archive	

#### Archive Contents/Media

	Physical Contents	Digital Contents	Paper Contents
Animal Bones			
Ceramics			
Environmental			
Glass			
Human Bones			
Industrial			
Leather			
Metal			
Stratigraphic			
Survey			
Textiles			
Wood			
Worked Bone			
Worked Stone/Lithic			
None			
Other			

#### Notes:



© Crown copyright. All rights reserved Cambridgeshire County Council 100023205 [2015]. Figure 1: Site location, showing fieldwalking grid (red).

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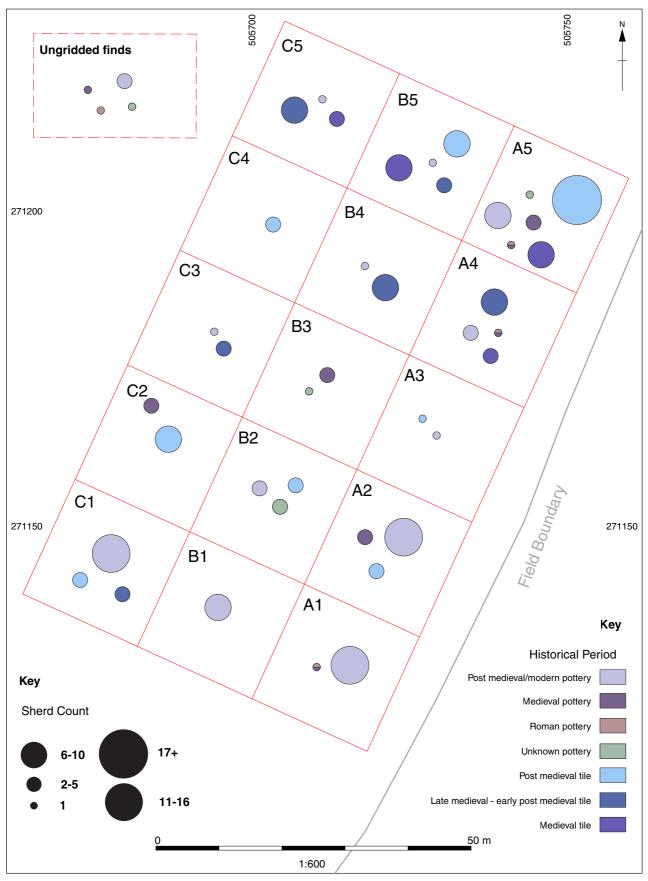


Figure 2: Fieldwalking grid, showing concentrations of pottery and tile





Plate 1: Medieval shellyware



Plate 2: Post-medieval gun-flint





Plate 3: A volunteer fieldwalking



Plate 4: Spotting finds while laying out the grid



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