



Cambridge Archaeology Field Group

Fieldwalking on the Childerley Estate
Cambridgeshire

2009 to 2014

Summary

Fieldwalking on the Childerley estate of Martin Jenkins and Family has revealed, up to March 2014, three sites of Roman activity, probably settlements, (TL 346 627, TL 349 635, TL 362 613) and one site of medieval activity, probably part of Little Childerley (TL354 619). The finds have been sorted into broad date categories but further work could be done by suitable experts to better define the source and date. Further fieldwalking on the estate may well produce evidence of more settlement sites.

Introduction

Members of Cambridge Archaeology Field Group (CAFG) have been undertaking fieldwalking since 1980 with a particular concentration on the clay lands of west Cambridgeshire. As part of this continuing study of the distribution of settlement of all periods, the owners of the Childerley estate, Martin Jenkins and Family, were asked in 2009 if they would agree to the fields being walked. Thanks to their agreement and support, steady progress has been made across this estate.

A preliminary report was produced in 2011 of the results from 2009 to 2011, these demonstrated that there was activity in the Roman period on fields to the east of Battle Gate Lane. This area was of particular interest as CAFG have a copy of an aerial photograph taken for ADAS which shows evidence of ditches that seem to suggest Iron Age settlements

Since 2011 fieldwalking has been continued on the fields on the east and north sides of the estate and on fields in Boxworth parish north-west of the agricultural research centre. The results of this work will be reported here.

Location and topography

The Childerley estate lies mainly in the parish of Childerley but extends westwards into the parish of Boxworth. The eastern boundary of the estate abuts the parish of Dry Drayton and to the north is the parish of Lolworth. The southern boundary is the A428 Cambridge to St Neots road, Cambridge is about 9km (5 miles) to the east.

A heavy clay soil is derived from boulder clay overlying chalk and, as seen in the wet winter of 2013/4, can become waterlogged. The ground falls from c70m in the south to 45m in a north-east direction. What would have originally been three small streams drain from south to north. To the west Boxworth and Knapwell are separated by a somewhat larger stream.

Large arable fields are separated by hedges and there is a small amount of woodland.

The house and farm buildings of Childerley are all that remains of Great Childerley and its park. Little Childerley has completely disappeared.

Aims

Fieldwalking of large areas of agricultural land in areas not examined in detail by previous workers will potentially reveal evidence, usually pottery, of human activity and settlement of a wide date range. The mapping of this evidence will increase the understanding of land use and landscape development from pre-historic to modern times.

Methodology

Field walking has been undertaken by our normal method, members walking at 10m intervals in lines across the field, finds being bagged in no more than 20m intervals and the position of that collection point being recorded using a hand held GPs. (see fieldwalking on www.cafg.net)

Results

All finds have been placed into broad date periods based on identification by CAFG members. Finds are assigned to the column headed Prehistoric/Saxon if the fabric is similar to material of those periods found elsewhere. This is a very weak category because it is notoriously difficult to distinguish Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pottery from Early/Middle Saxon pottery and these should be re-assessed by a suitable pottery expert. Roman, medieval and post-medieval fabrics and forms are reasonably easily recognised but those assigned to the 'Unclassified' column would need an expert opinion. The recognition of major concentrations of finds from these periods probably indicates settlement but the interpretation of small numbers is more problematic. The finds are summarised in the table below.

Site Code	Pottery						B/T				Flint	
	Pr/Sax	Rom	Med	PMed	Unc	Tess	Rom	PMed	Metal	Glass	Struck	Burnt
CHL001	0	22	4	36	10	0	0	288	3	7	8	1
CHL002	2	91	4	124	24	0	11	242	4	3	1	1
CHL003	0	133	3	72	41	3	118	522	5	6	0	0
CHL004	2	17	32	137	48	0	0	85	5	9	14	4
CHL005	1	242	28	33	14	1	31	314	2	1	9	4
CHL006	0	25	172	108	31	0	2	317	13	7	12	5
Total	5	530	243	510	168	4	162	1768	32	33	44	15

Each session of contiguous weeks walking have been grouped together and labelled CHL001 to CHL006. The maps show the area walked up to March 2014 and significant concentrations of finds have been indicated by coloured dots. (Blue =1, Orange = 2 and Buff = > 3 per c100m square)

Prehistoric (to 50AD)

Five sherds of pottery have been assigned to this period but as noted above these need to be seen by a specialist pottery expert for definitive identification. In addition to the pottery, 44 struck flints and 15 burnt flint were recovered. The majority of these were widely distributed, but from the fields in the north west of the estate CHL004 the fourteen struck flints and four burnt flints may represent a significant Neolithic [3000 – 2000BC] concentration of activity.

Roman period

There are three concentrations of Roman finds, one in each of CHL002, CHL003 and CHL005. In group CHL002 the sherds were concentrated in an area of approximately 50m square centred on TL 346 627. The concentration in CHL003 is centred at TL 349 635 and contains 133 pottery sherds [of which one is the rim of an amphora, a rare find on a rural site] plus 41 sherds 'unknown' but probably Roman and 118 pieces of Roman ceramic building tile.

The concentration in CHL005 has 242 Roman pottery sherds, 14 'unknown' probably Roman and 31 Roman building ceramic tiles. These are centred on TL 362 613. This area abuts the eastern estate boundary and may continue to the east.

Medieval

There is one concentration of 12th to 14th century Medieval pottery from all areas, in CHL006. In addition to 172 pottery sherd there are pieces of Niedermendig lave quern and medieval roof tile. These are mainly centred on TL 354 619.

Small finds

A few exceptional items have been found.

One interesting find made in 2009 was a coin (picture below). This is an 1817 'Mourning Medal' of Princess Charlotte Augusta of Wales the only daughter of King George IV. She married Leopold of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld on 2nd October 1816 and died at the age of 21 on the 6th November 1817 after giving birth to a stillborn son. The whole nation mourned the passing of a favourite princess, and amongst many memorials this copper/bronze coin was struck. It had (and has) no monetary value but is really of interest as a piece of social history, there are many parallels to the death of Princess Diana in 1997.



One exceptional piece is the rim (photo below) of a Roman period Spanish amphora, originally for wine or olive oil; these are rarely found on rural sites – did the people of this area around Childerley have a taste for Spanish wine?



A late Medieval 'spectacle' buckle



A fossil vertebra from an Ichthyosaur



Discussion

Prehistoric

The flint work from the fields in Boxworth was recovered from facing ground sloping down to the stream separating this parish from Knapwell. Anecdotal evidence from a near neighbour suggests that more struck flint has been found in this area. Submission of the finds to a flint expert would be useful to establish if any could be dated as early as Mesolithic. In the west of Cambridgeshire material of this date has been found only rarely.

Iron Age/Roman

CAFG have a copy of an aerial photograph taken on behalf of ADAS (?in the 1980s) of the fields east of Battle Gate Road which shows curved and straight ditches suggestive of Iron Age farmsteads. Only one of these soil mark sites produced pottery and that of the 2nd to 4th century Roman period. It is possible that if the recovered pottery was examined by a suitable specialist, Iron Age sherds might be recognised. Although other aerial photographs of the estate have been looked at no other possible Iron Age sites have been

identified. The lack of pottery and of crop and soil marks may be due to poor conditions for these to show. It is highly likely that there are more late Iron Age sites.

Medieval

The site at TL 354 619 is probably part of the village or hamlet of Little Childerley.

The RCHM report states :

Village Remains (around N.G. TL 353617, not on O.S.). Earthworks, probably remains of the village of Little Childerley, standing on a level site of boulder clay 200 ft. above O.D. and 300 yds. N.W. of Childerley Hall, were completely destroyed by ploughing between 1955 and 1959; only oblique air photographs give any idea of their appearance. There was a straight E. and W. track about 900 ft. long and 20 ft. to 30 ft. wide with a continuous line of rectangular platforms on either side and ridge and furrow running up to their outer sides; ploughing is said to have revealed a wide cobbled strip, probably the street. Sherds of the 11th to 13th centuries occur on the site.

It is difficult to relate the position of CAFG's finds with this description but the pottery recovered in this work may represent the north-west part of the settlement. At least two house platforms are still evident and geophysical survey might give more evidence. The pottery would seem to fit with the date given by the RCHM but submission to a suitable expert would confirm the detail of this.

Post-medieval

Large quantities of post -medieval pottery, brick and tile were recovered across the whole area walked. Surprisingly the fields in CHL005 on the eastern side of the farm buildings, called Brick Clamp, did not produce any evidence of brick making or storing. It is possible that the brick clamps [or kilns] were nearer to the present house at Great Childerley.

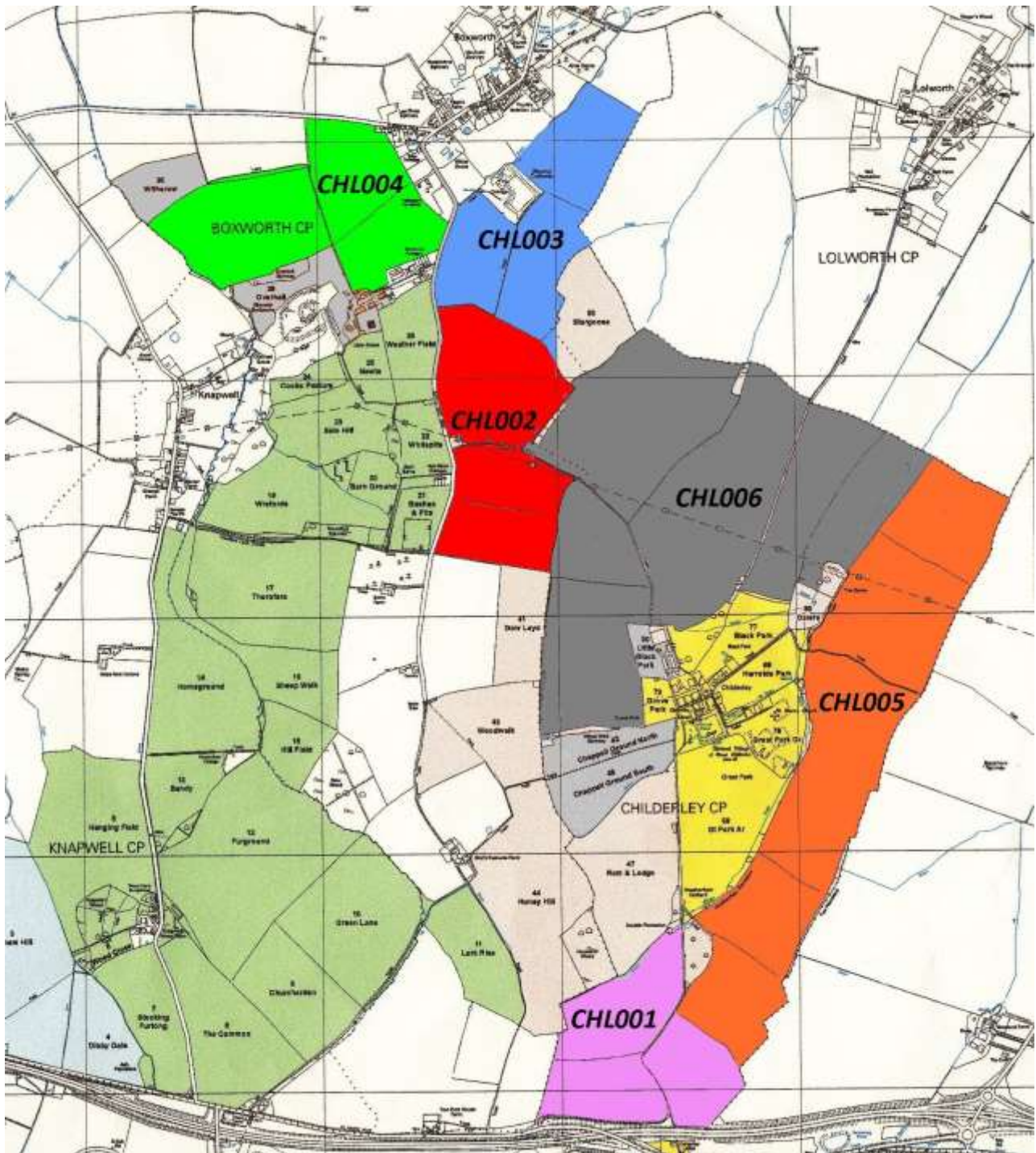
Comments

Fieldwalking up to March 2014 has revealed three sites of Roman activity, probably settlements, and one site of medieval activity, probably part of Little Childerley. The finds have been sorted into broad date categories but further work could be done by suitable experts to better define the source and date. This evidence contributes to the understanding of the development of the landscape, particularly from the Late Iron Age through the Roman into the medieval. Further fieldwalking on the estate may well produce evidence of more settlement sites.

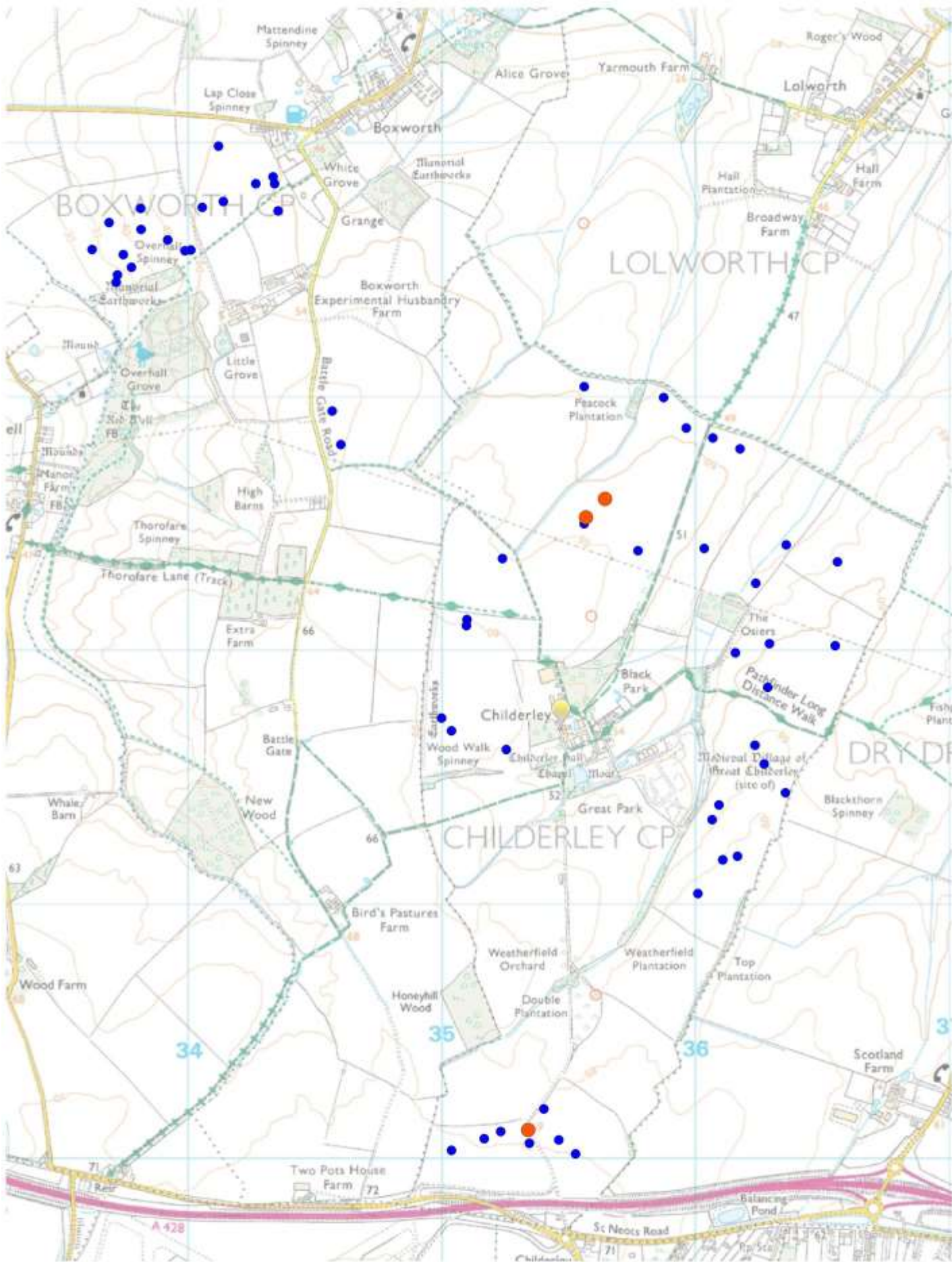
Fieldwalking suffers from serious limitations; pottery has to have been well fired to survive cultivation of the top soil. It is unlikely that prehistoric or Early/Middle Saxon pottery will survive in any quantity, whereas pottery from the Roman, medieval and post-medieval periods may well survive in good condition. Humanly worked flints will survive but are difficult to recognise, particularly where there are natural flints on the surface. The condition of the soil surface will effect recovery; ideal is a top soil which has been ploughed, cultivated and been exposed to rain for some time.

Metal detecting has been carried out on parts of the estate by Simon Hall, of significance is his finding of Roman metal items on the site at TL 349 365. These have not been included in this report.

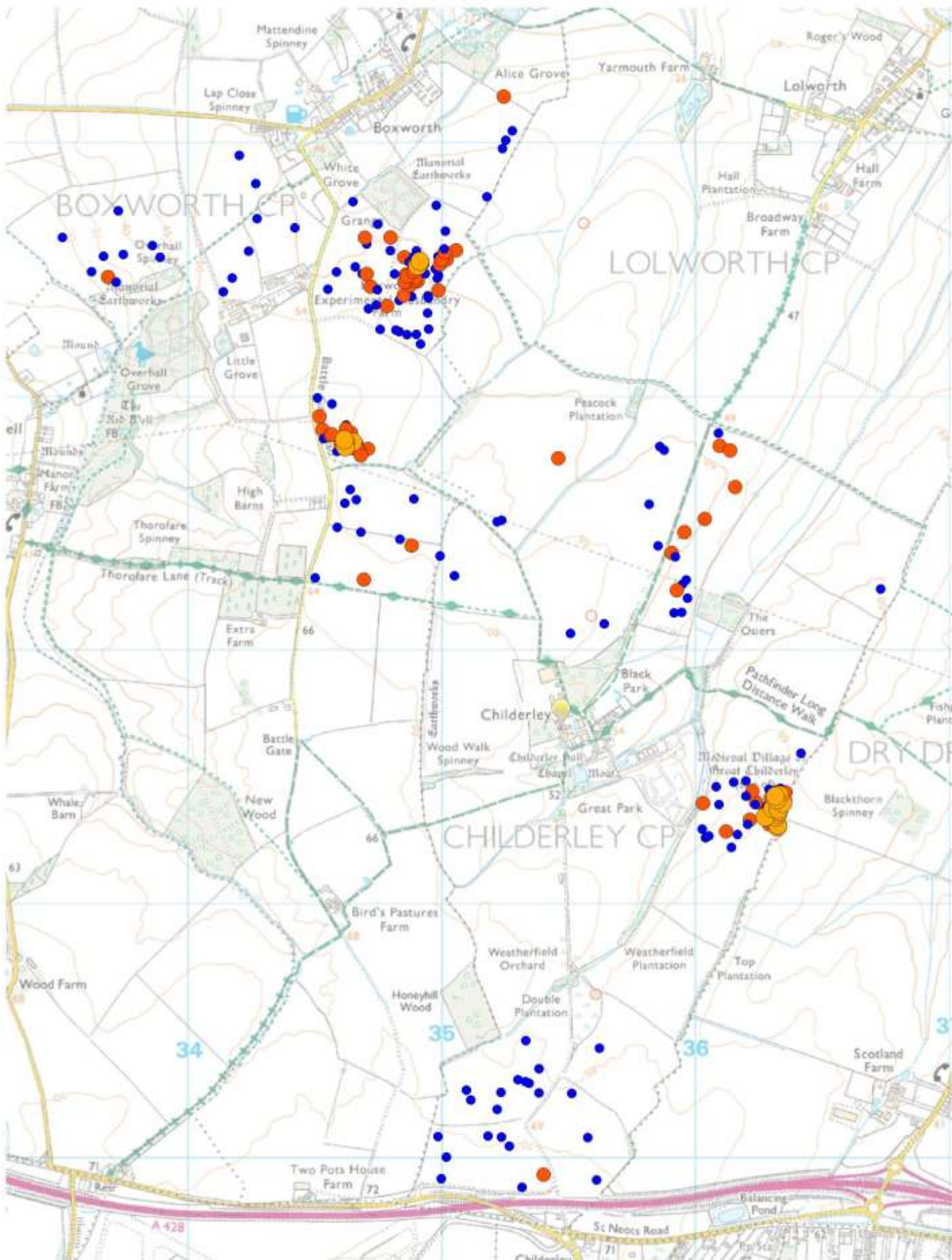
CAFG Grouped areas designated by CHL000 numbers



Childerley – Struck Flint



Childerley – Roman pottery



Childerley – Medieval pottery

