



Cambridge Archaeology Field Group

***Field walking on sites near the
Deserted Medieval Village of Clopton***

CHER Number ECB6309 & 6310

Scheduled monument 1006883

TL 299488

Part 1: Oct 2018 to Nov 2019

Summary

Field walking investigations near the scheduled Deserted Medieval Village site at Clopton (around TL299 488) began in 2018 with a preliminary visit by some CAFG (Cambridge Archaeology Field Group) members. This revealed the presence of a quantity of surface pottery finds on the arable land to the north and west of the DMV site. Subsequently, a series of targeted field walking activities were carried out in the fields north and south of the bridleway from Arrington to Tadlow and to the west of the scheduled area. These recovered concentrations of surface finds dating over multiple periods, from the Bronze Age, the Iron Age, the Roman period, the Saxon period, the Medieval and the Post medieval periods. The density of finds decreased the further west the area searched, while the area north of the scheduled area itself produced very few finds. This enables the possible extent of the settlement to be suggested and is an important addition to the information known about this major local DMV site.

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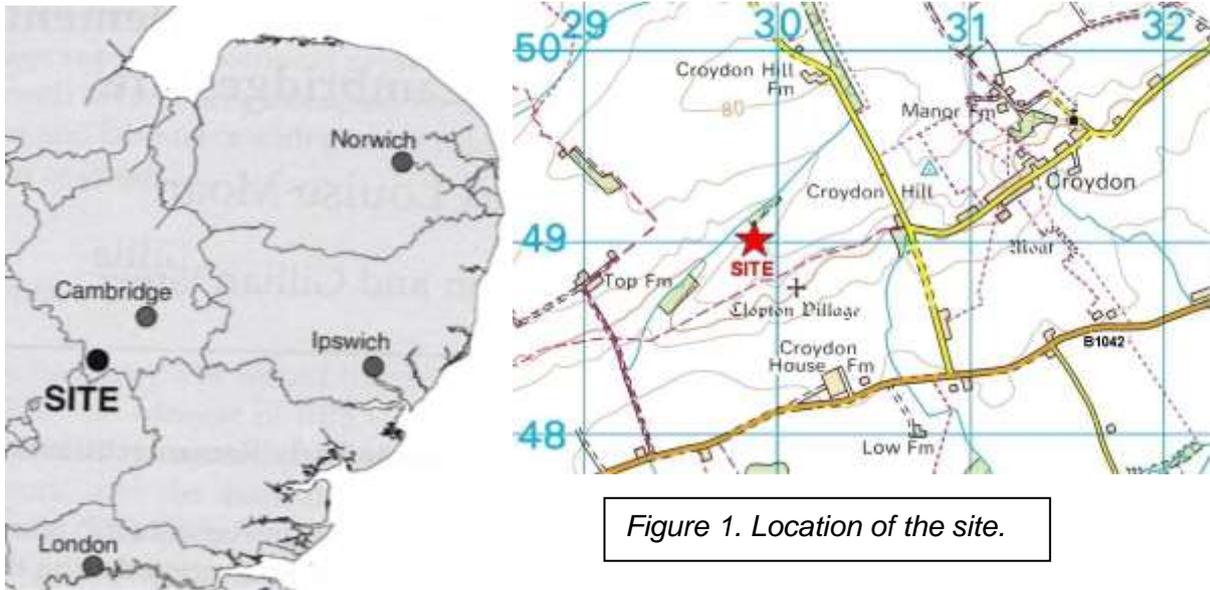
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Field walking at the DMV of Clopton

Location and topography

Figure 1 shows the site lies some 16km south west of Cambridge, approximately 1.5km west of Croydon village and 3km west of Ermine Street (A1198). It overlooks the B1042 Cambridge to Biggleswade road.



The site lies on a south facing scarp where the geology is composed of boulder clay on top of chalk marl overlying gault clay. Height varies from 25m OD at the river valley base to 75m OD at the top and there is a spring line at the chalk base.

What previous knowledge is there in the area concerned ?

The immediate area of Clopton has very few entries noted at the Cambridgeshire HER apart from the DMV site itself (which was scheduled 1/10/54). Those records that exist mostly refer to the landscape and architecture around Croydon village itself, which lies nearly 1.5km east of our field walking area.

An excavation by T Lethbridge in the North Field of the village is noted for 1933 but produced little of note. The area was also investigated and planned by the RCHM in 1962 as shown in Figure 3 (RCHM 1968).

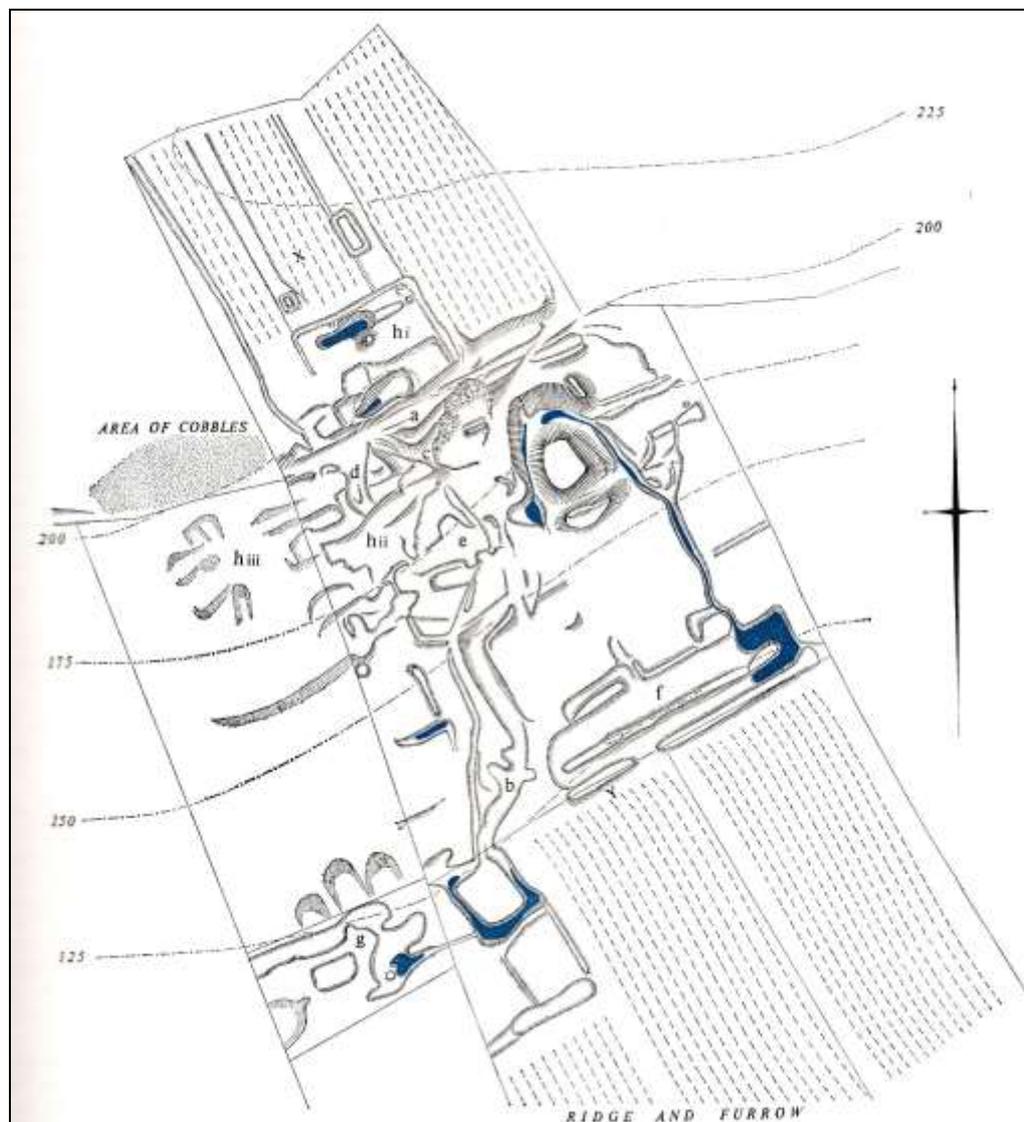


Figure 3. DMV landscape site plan, RCHM 1968.

The main source of excavated information is the series of excavations carried out by J Alexander in 1961, 1962 and 1964 on the scheduled area (Alexander 1968). Finally Cambridge University collection of aerial photographs has a number for the Clopton site spanning the period 1957 - 1981.

CAFG field walking programme

The field walking programme for Clopton started in the autumn of 2018 on field A (see Figure 2) north of the Arrington to Tadlow trackway (ECB6309). The field had been planted and showed some sign of growth. The usual format of walking transects 10m apart in the direction of the cultivation lines was used, the lines being approximately parallel to the eastern boundary of Field A. Finds were picked up and bagged every 10m, with the bags attached to canes marking their position. Subsequently the bags were tagged and the positions of the canes recorded using a Garmin eTrex10 hand-held GPS to produce a list of OS co-ordinates for mapping.

Field A was not completed in 2018 and was finished early in October 2019. Attention then transferred to the Field B south of the trackway (ECB6310) where considerable re-growth meant our transects were at approximately 45 degrees south westerly from the eastern field boundary and following harvesting lines.

Results of the CAFG field walking

Pottery and building material from most periods were recovered, as shown in Table 1 for Field A (CAFG designation CLP001). The column labelled “Unc” are pieces that could not be positively identified but they could represent more Roman period pieces. The Pre/Sax column represents pottery believed to be early in date but where the date is unsure. The flints were mostly waste flakes but with an occasional blade. There were a number of items listed under the heading “Others” on our original spreadsheet, including 3 pieces of lava quern stone and 11 pieces of slag. A total of 16 pieces of oyster shell, 4 bones and 3 animal teeth were also recovered along with a modern whetstone.

Pottery					Brick & Tile					Flint	
Pr/Sax	Rom	Med	PMed	Unc	Rom	Med	PMed	Metal	Glass	Struck	Burnt
30	30	840	84	3	1	50	150	9	7	30	2

Table 1. Total number of pieces found in each category for Field A.

Pottery and building material for the area of Field B (CAFG designation CLP002) covered so far are shown in Table 2.

Pottery					Brick & Tile					Flint	
Pr/Sax	Rom	Med	PMed	Unc	Rom	Med	PMed	Metal	Glass	Struck	Burnt
57	93	1869	96	8	9	82	475	21	10	20	1

Table 2. Total number of pieces found in each category for Field B.

There were a number of items listed under the heading “Others”, including 39 pieces of lava quern stone and 48 pieces of slag. A total of 45 pieces of oyster shell, 160 bones and animal teeth were also recovered along with two pieces of modern whetstone. Also recovered were 49 pieces of daub and 36 pieces of coprolite (presumably left after the known coprolite mining on the site).

Pottery finds evaluation.

Although the pottery recovered by our field walking is mostly abraded smaller pieces, it is possible to do some analysis of the pottery types found. A full analysis of the pottery recovered so far has been carried out by Paul Blinkhorn, and Appendix 1 lists the main types recorded using his classification system.

Discussion

The identifications of pottery finds by historical period and type (using Paul Blinkhorn’s classification) for CLP001 and CLP002 are shown in the tables and figures below. Totals for the 19/20th C are low because the bulk of this period’s finds were removed during preliminary sorting.

Period	Bronze Age	Iron Age	Roman	Saxon	Medieval	Late med	Post med	19/20th C
No. of pieces	2	6	34	22	534	190	44	4

Table 3. Number of pieces of pottery found for each historical period for CLP001.

Period	Bronze Age	Iron Age	Roman	Saxon	Medieval	Late med	Post med	19/20th C
No. of pieces	8	17	92	152	1520	219	19	10

Table 4. Number of pieces of pottery found for each historical period for CLP002.

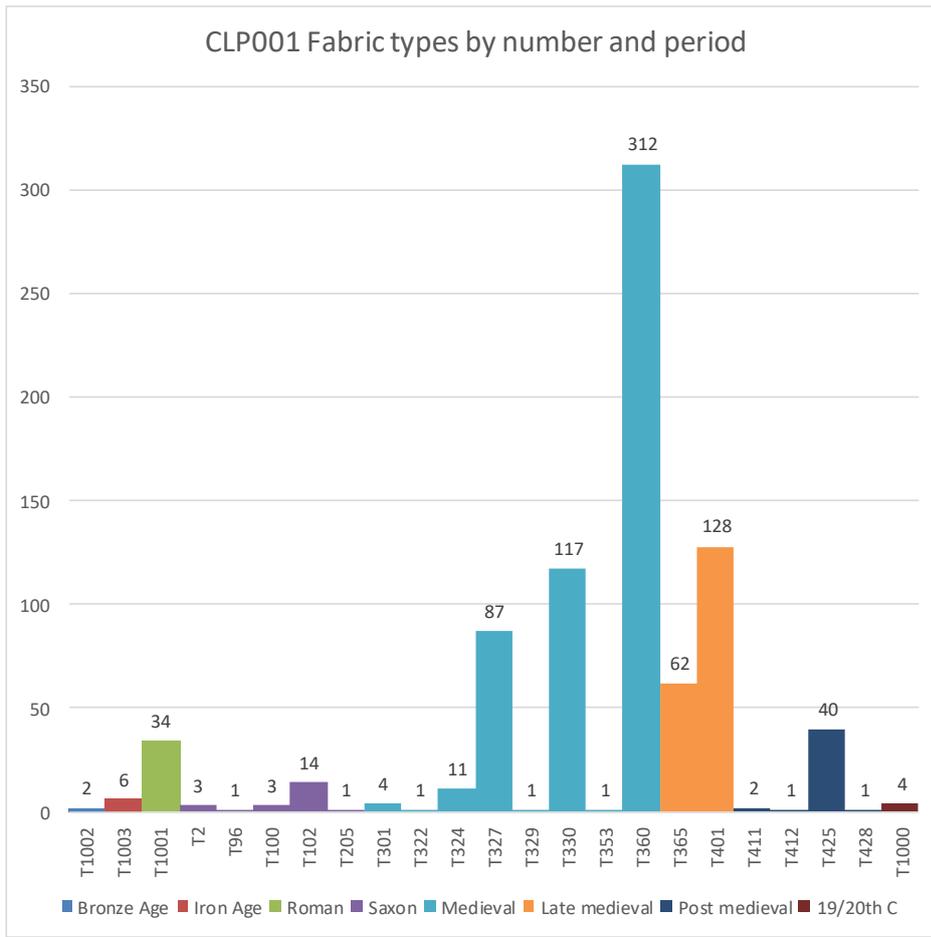


Figure 4. Statistics for pottery finds in area CLP001.

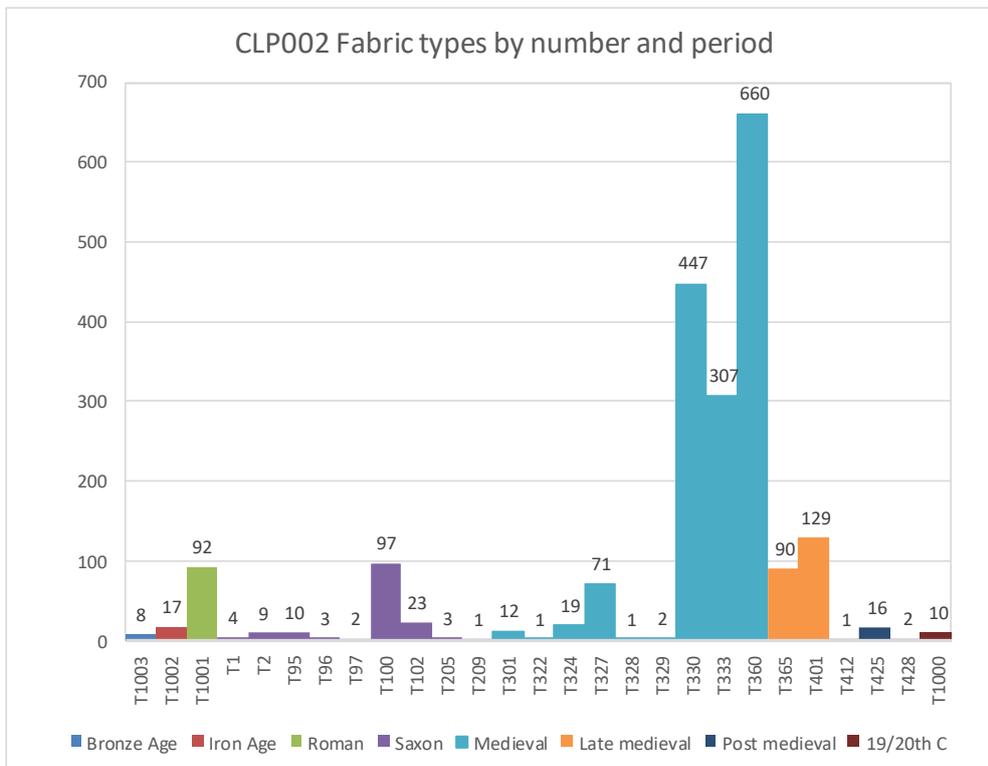


Figure 5. Statistics for pottery finds in area CLP002.

The date profile of the pottery recovered by CAFG, both north and south of the Arrington – Tadlow trackway, largely agrees with the findings of John Alexander (1968). He indicates his first period was the 2nd – 4th C Roman era, based on 700 small, worn sherds collected from the surface and by excavation. He reports only five sherds from the Early Saxon period (7th – 9th C) which is when he dates the establishment of the village. Based on the quantity of pottery finds for certain periods, he stated that the village flourished in the 12th – 14th C (with its pottery extending west of the current scheduled area but not to the east). He also noted that in the 14th C there were 104 taxpayers but by the late 15th C there were only 6 households recorded. This coincides with the enclosure of the area in c.1495AD by John Fisher for sheep grazing. By the 16th C there were only two houses and the ecclesiastical parish had become extinct by 1561AD.

Our field walking produced additional information with the recovery of small amounts of Bronze Age and Iron Age pottery to the west of the current scheduled area. The small number of Early Saxon finds found by field walking is probably due to the fragile nature of pottery from this period which does not survive well in plough soil horizons.

Distribution plots

The following distribution plots (courtesy of William Franklin) show the extent of the pottery finds from each of the main periods.

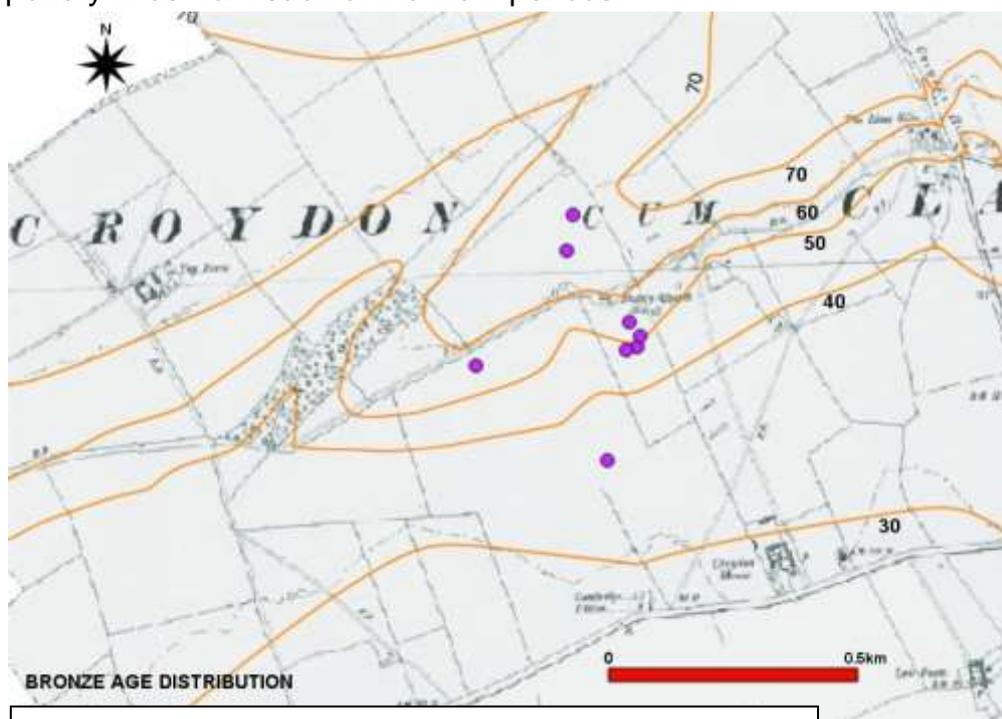


Figure 7. Pottery distribution for Bronze Age period finds.

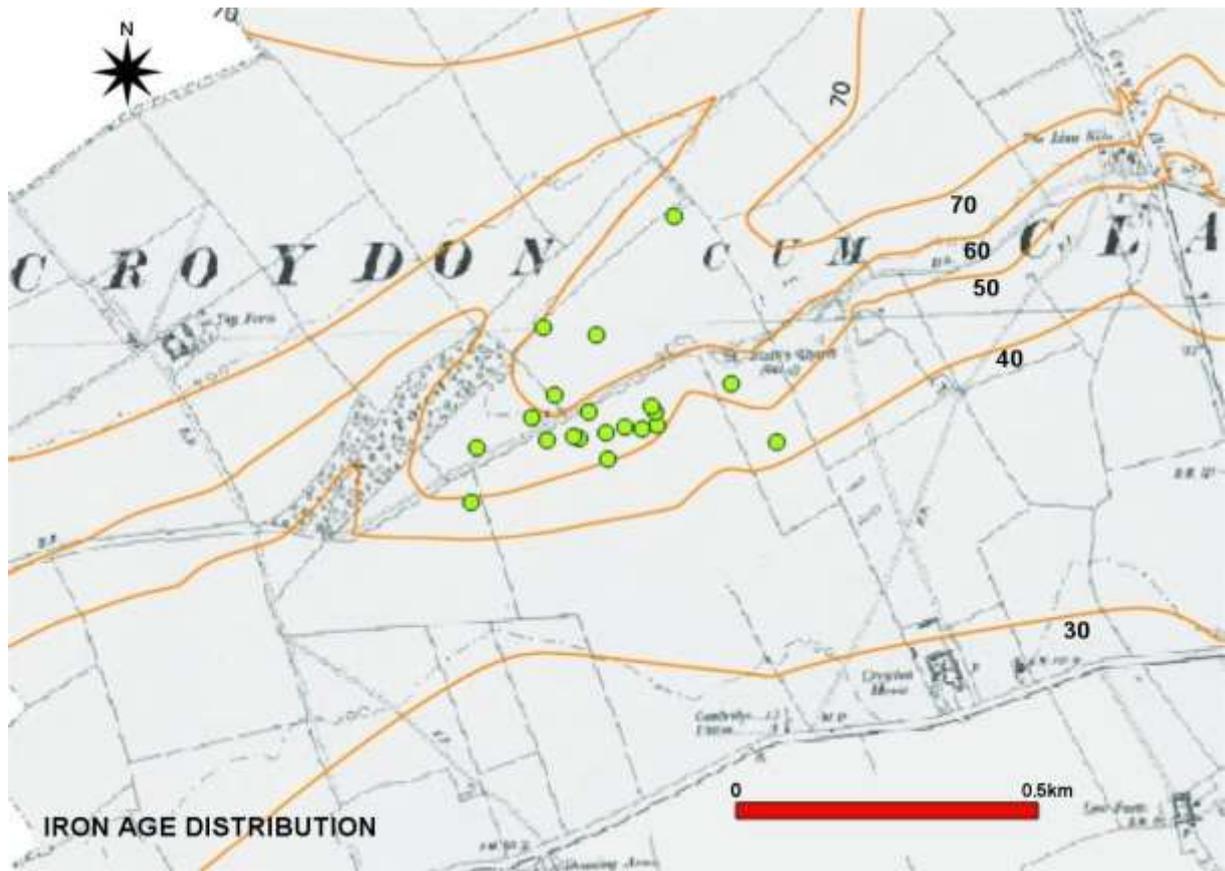


Figure 7. Pottery distribution for Iron Age period finds.

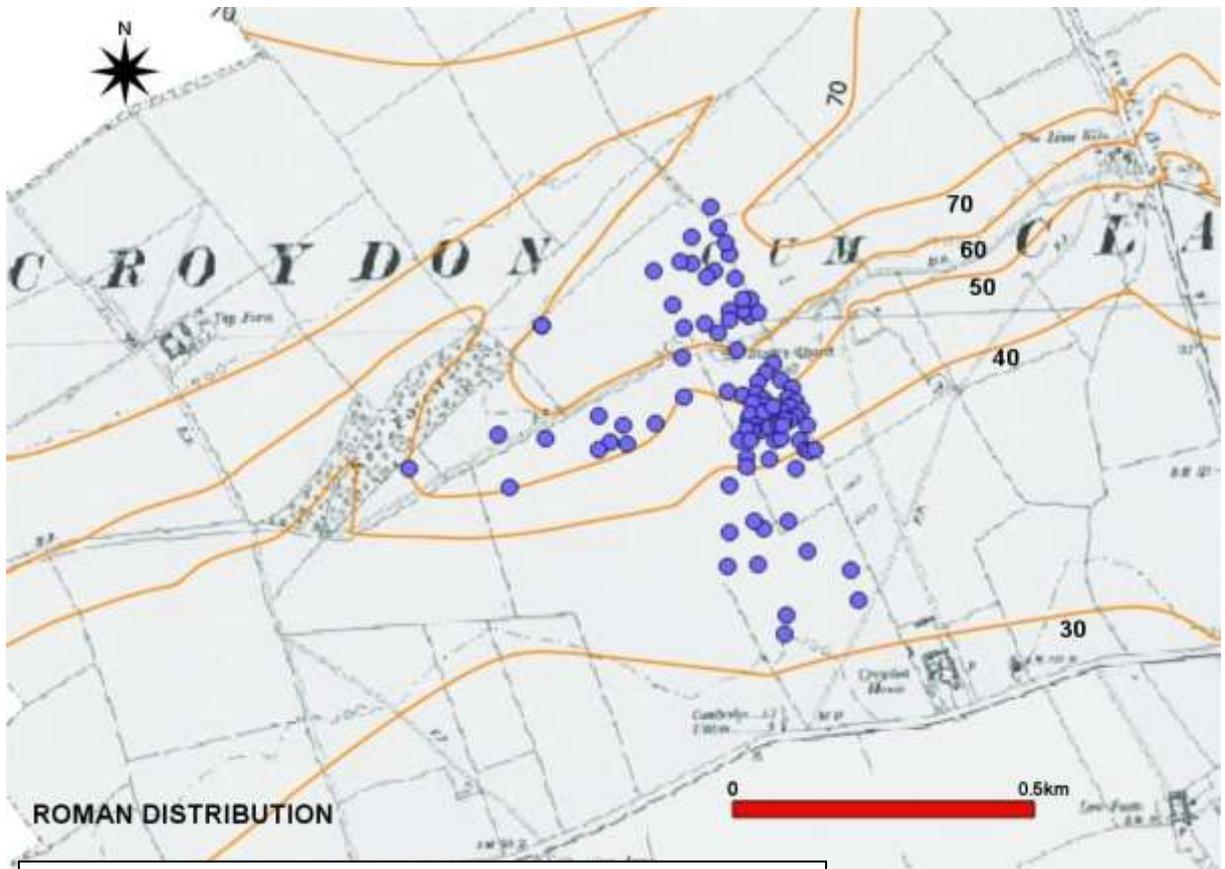


Figure 8. Pottery distribution for Roman period finds.

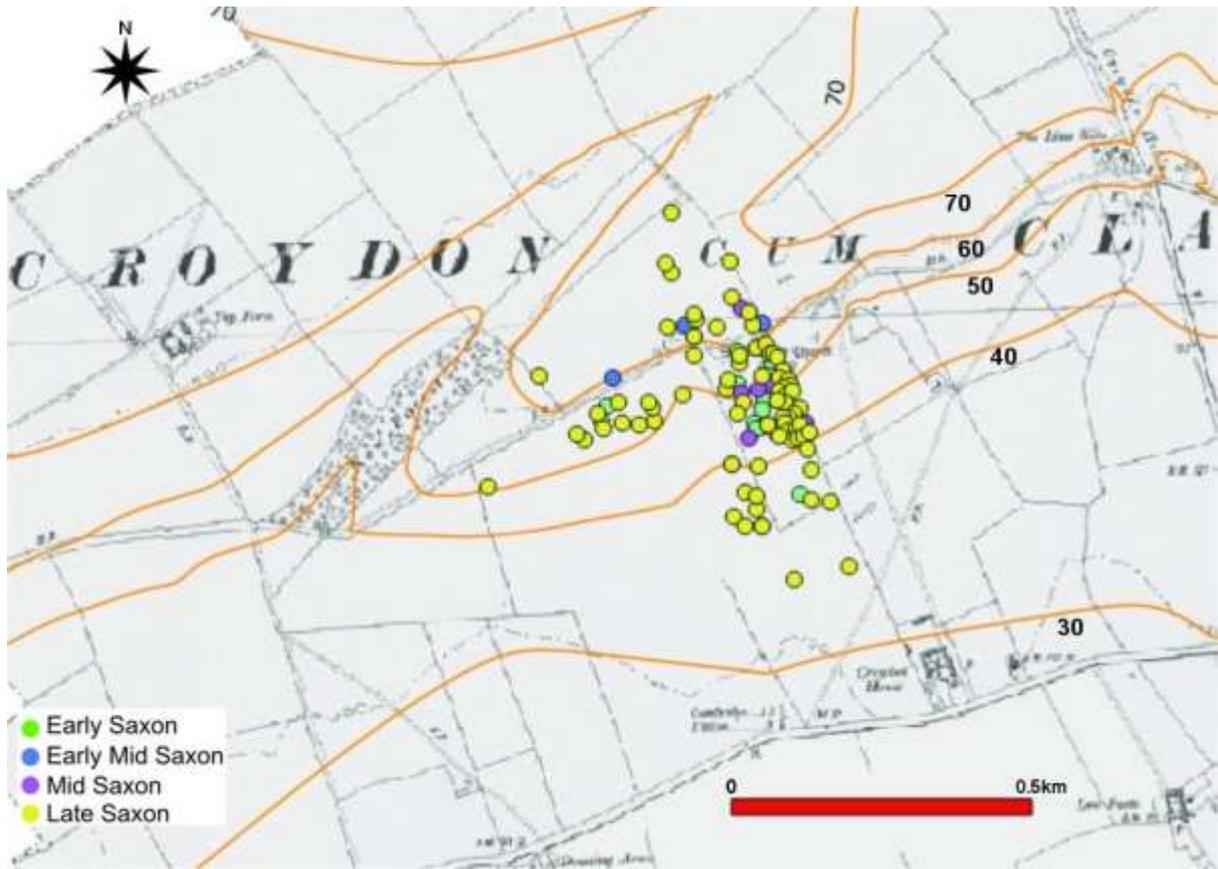


Figure 9. Pottery distribution for Saxon period finds.

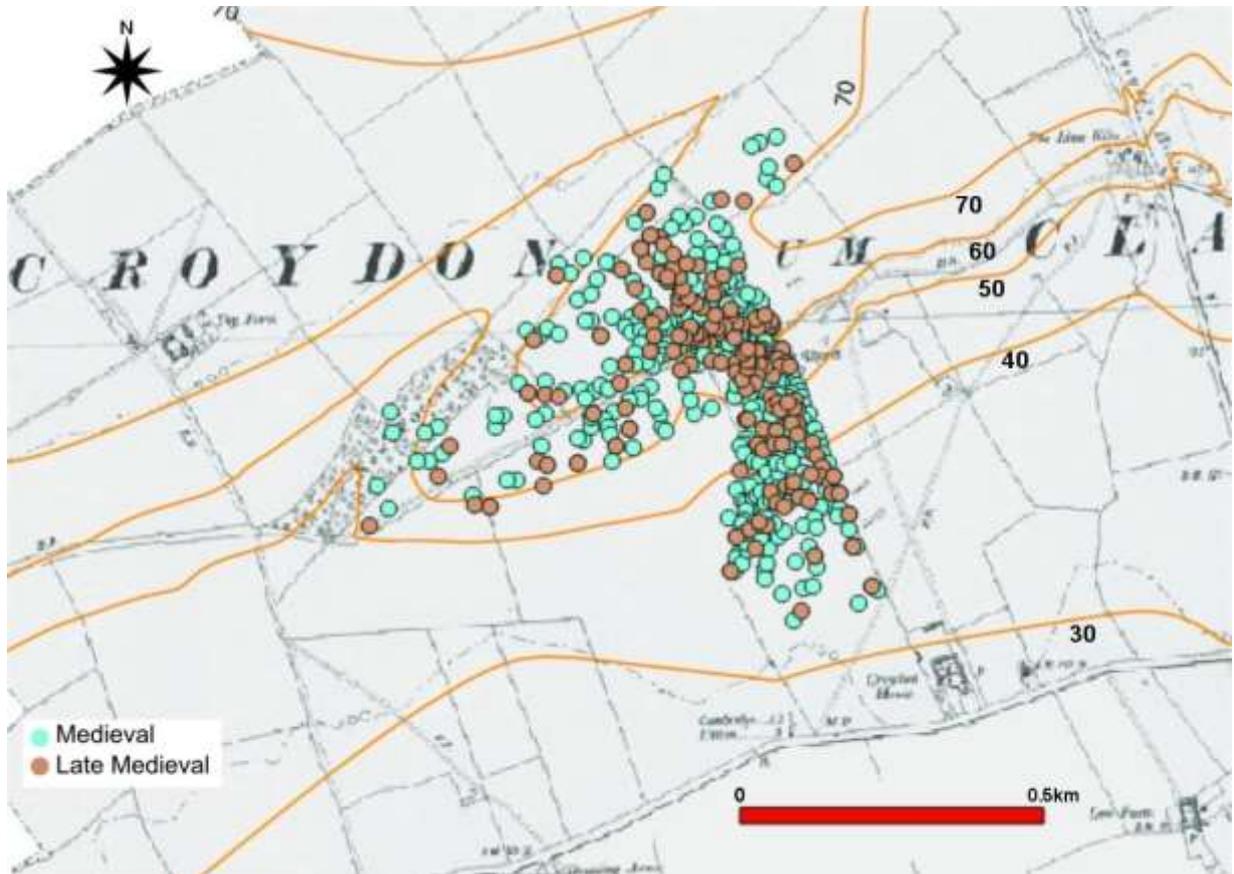


Figure 10. Pottery distribution for Medieval period finds.

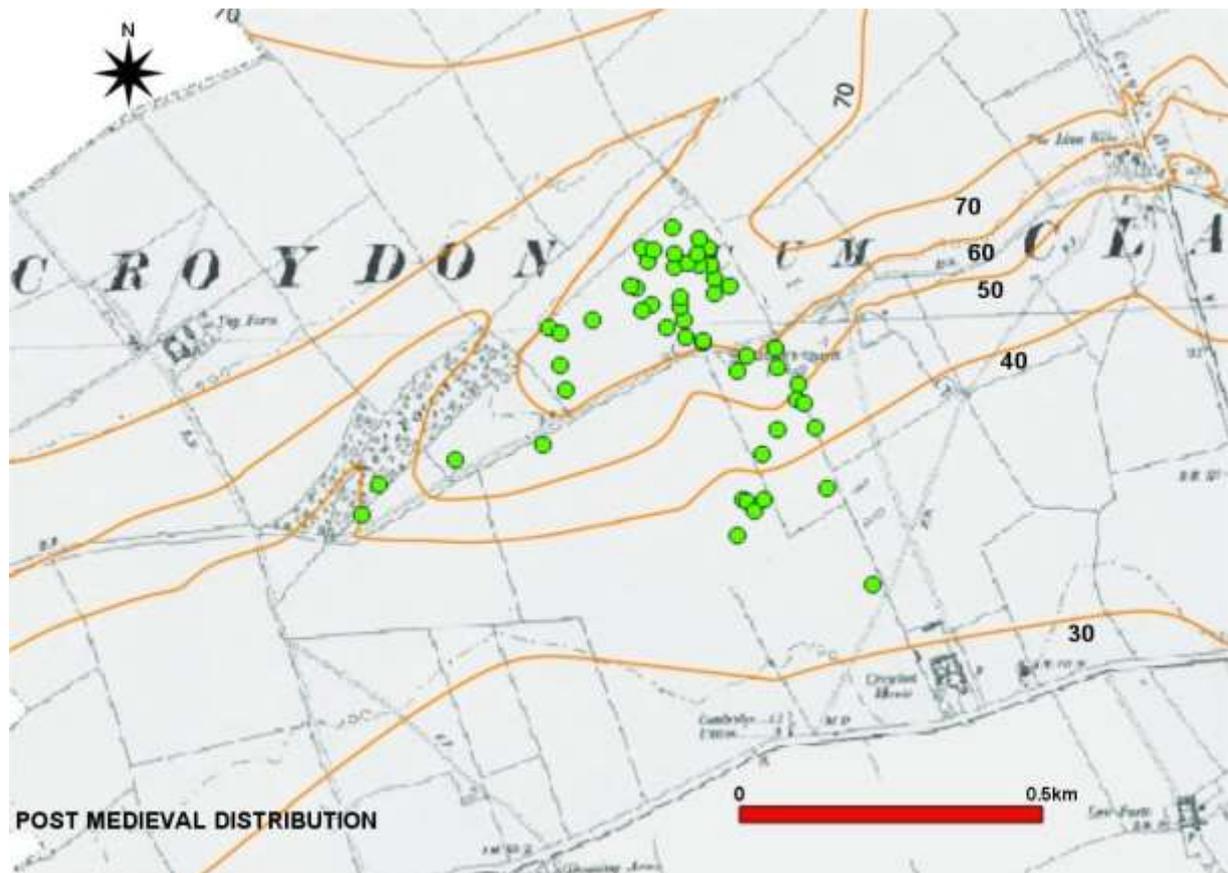


Figure 11. Pottery distribution for Post medieval period finds.

The blank triangle, most visible in the medieval pottery plot, is an area not covered by the Part 1 field walking (but was covered in subsequent 2020 field walking). The straight line visible to the right side in some plots represents the western edge of the scheduled area.

The small number of Bronze Age finds mostly lie south of the trackway and close to the current scheduled area western boundary. This would have been part way down slope and fairly close to the current spring line, as such it would presumably have been a desirable site due to these factors.

The Iron Age finds mostly lie further west than the Bronze Age finds and away from the presumed centre of the medieval activity. They lie mostly south of the trackway but close to it.

The Roman finds are more clustered near the western edge of the scheduled area but are more prevalent north of the trackway than either the Bronze or Iron Age finds. They also extend from the crest of the ridge right the way down to the lower ground alongside the modern B1042 road.

Likewise, the various Saxon period finds occupy a similar area to the Roman finds but do not go downhill as far. There are clearly many more Late Saxon finds compared to the earlier Saxon period finds.

The medieval finds are prolific on either side of the trackway and also extend some 800 metres west of the scheduled area boundary. The sheer quantity of medieval finds correlates well with this period being when the village was at its peak in terms of occupancy and area.

Future work on this site.

Part 2 of this report will concentrate on the field walking carried out on the remainder of Field B during the spring and autumn of 2020.

Bibliography

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RCHM 1968, *An inventory of Historical Monuments in the County of Cambridge: Volume 1: West Cambridgeshire*. London: HMSO, p76 – 78.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the CAFG members who carried out the field walking and subsequent processing of these finds. Also to Paul Blinkhorn for his excellent work and rapid turnaround of the pottery identification. CAFG would like to thank CBA East and the Cambridge Antiquarian Society for their grants to fund this pottery identification work.

Thanks also to the owners of Top Farm and Velcourt Ltd for permission to carry out the field walking on the area around the DMV and for their continued support.

Thanks to William Franklin for his work on plotting of the finds distribution.

Appendix 1. List of pottery types found, Paul Blinkhorn classification

F1001:	All Romano-British.				
F1002:	Iron Age. Shell and/or grog-tempered.				
F1003:	Bronze Age. Flint-tempered.				
F1:	E/MSax Organic-tempered Wares, 5th - 9th century				
F2:	E/MSax Sandy Wares, 5th - 9th century				
F95:	Ipswich Ware, Gp 1 fabric, AD720-850 (Blinkhorn 2012)				
F96:	Ipswich Ware, Gp 2 fabric, AD720-850 (Blinkhorn 2012)				
F97:	Raunds Maxey-type Ware, AD650-850 (Blinkhorn 2009)				
F100:	St Neots Ware, AD900-1200 (Denham 1985)				
F102:	Thetford Ware, AD850-1100 (Rogerson and Dallas 1984)				
F205:	Stamford Ware, AD850-1250 (Kilmurry 1980).				
F209:	Oolitic Ware, AD975-1300 (Blinkhorn 2010).				
F301:	Ely Ware, mid 12th -15th century (Spoerry 2008)				
F322:	Lyveden/Stanion 'D' Ware, 1350-1550 (Blinkhorn 2008)				
F324:	Brill/Boarstall Ware, AD1200-1600 (Mellor 1994).				
F327:	Hedingham Ware, late 12th - 14th century (Walker 2012).				
F328:	Grimston Ware, 13th - 15th century (Leah 1994).				
F329:	Potterspury Ware, 1250-1600 (Mynard 1970)				
F330:	Shelly Coarseware, AD1100-1400 (McCarthy 1979).				
F333:	Hertfordshire-type Grey Ware, mid 12th - 14th century (Turner-Rugg 1993).				
F353:	Cambridgeshire Sgraffito Ware, AD1350-1500 (Spoerry 2016)				
F360:	Miscellaneous Medieval Sandy Wares, 11th - 14th century.				
F365:	Late Medieval Reduced Ware, late 14th - 16th century (Blinkhorn 2007)				
F401:	Late Medieval Transitional Wares, c AD1400-1550 (eg. Johnston 1997).				
F411:	Metropolitan-type Slipware, 17th - 18th century (Davey and Walker 2009)				

F412:	Midland Blackware, AD 1580-1700 (Brears 1969).				
F425:	Glazed Red Earthenware, 16th - 19th century (Brears 1969).				
F428:	Staffordshire Slipware, AD1640-1750.				
F1000:	Miscellaneous 19th and 20th century wares.				

Appendix 1. Type descriptions and dates for the pottery found in Field A and B. (Classification by Paul Blinkhorn).

TCD

Version 1.1