Middle Bronze Age and Roman Settlement at Manor Pit, Baston, Lincolnshire

Excavations 2002-2014

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Leon Field and Adam Yates

with contributions from

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Project background

Excavations found a range of archaeological remains dating from the early Bronze Age to the post-medieval period with the principal discoveries comprising middle Bronze Age settlements within a substantial field system and parts of two adjacent Roman settlements.

The Baston Manor pit archaeological project progressed over a 12 year period (2002-2014). The work began when the potential of the site was assessed with a desk-based assessment by John Samuels (JSAC 2002), followed by a series of works by Northamptonshire Archaeology (now MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology)) with a geophysical survey (NA 2002), fieldwalking (Upson-Smith 2003) and a trial excavation (Morris 2004). This was followed by a programme of excavation prior to mineral extraction. Excavations in the southern area took place over two consecutive years (2006-2007) and the westernmost part of the northern area in 2008 (Fig 1.1). The 2006-2008 excavations were reported as a client report in 2010 (Yates and Field 2010). Further excavations occurred in stages every year with the exception of 2013 where a small watching brief took place within the northern area from 2009-2014. This present report incorporates the results of all fieldwork carried out between 2002 and 2014 into a single standalone volume. Excavation areas by year are detailed in Table 1.1 and on Fig 1.1.

Location, topography and geology

The Manor Pit excavations were centred on NGR TF 1260 1500 and located on land to the east of the village either side of Baston Outgang Road (Fig 1.1). Baston itself is situated in the southern part of Lincolnshire on the edge of the Fens, some 4km north-west of Market Deeping and 6km south of Bourne. The topography of the area is typical of the western Fen Edge, comprising generally flat land between 3m and 5m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) gently sloping down to the east. In the Baston Manor Pit area only the western fifth of the site was below 3m aOD with the remainder between 3m and 5m aOD (Fig 1.2). It is pertinent that all the archaeological remains were found in the higher extent of the site.

The site lies on a narrow band of river terrace sands and gravels that lie on the western fen edge south of Bourne, although these are considerably more extensive in the Welland Valley itself to the south of Market Deeping. To the west lie sedimentary rocks of the Great and Inferior Oolite Groups and Oxford Clays, which extend beneath the terrace gravels. To the east are the intercalated clays and peats of the Fen. Soils are well-drained calcareous loams of the Badsey 2 association (SSEW 1983).

The drainage pattern is dominated by a series of generally easterly flowing streams and rivers, which run from the higher ground to the west, across the terrace gravels and through the Fens, before draining ultimately into the Wash. These include the River Glen, a tributary of the River Welland, which lies approximately 1km to the north of Baston (Fig 1.3).

Cropmarks and archaeological excavations

Excavations at Baston Manor Pit took place in a landscape where a plethora of cropmarks have previously been recorded in the Historic Environment Record (HER) from aerial photographs, including some cropmarks within the Manor Pit excavation area itself (Fig 1.3; cropmark locations courtesy of the Lincolnshire HER). These aerial photographs had been taken in the middle of the 20th century after some of the areas around Baston Manor Pit had been already quarried. In a few other locations quarrying had occurred after cropmarks had been captured by air photography but before archaeology had become linked to the planning process and therefore no excavations were carried out. This can be clearly seen in one *c*0.60 by 0.30km area less than 1km to the south of Baston Manor Pit where many cropmarks had been recorded on land which was subsequently quarried (Fig 1.3). The quarried areas are now large water features (Fig 1.4).

Most of the archaeological work within the landscape around Baston has occurred over the last 20 years. There have been 15 other phases of archaeological intervention by other archaeological units in the immediate vicinity of Baston Manor Pit during this period (Fig 1.3). This archaeological work has collectively provided significant insight into the wider Baston landscape. The archaeological works have collectively managed to date some of the cropmarks, suggesting there was a substantial Bronze Age field system over an area at least 4km by 1km, largely aligned north-west to south-east. The main element of the system comprised up to seven parallel ditches. This field system was recorded within the BMP06-07 and BMP10-12 excavation areas. Other cropmarks identified within the Manor Pit area included a north to south a ribbon type settlement as well as an east to west routeway which headed towards the Car Dyke.

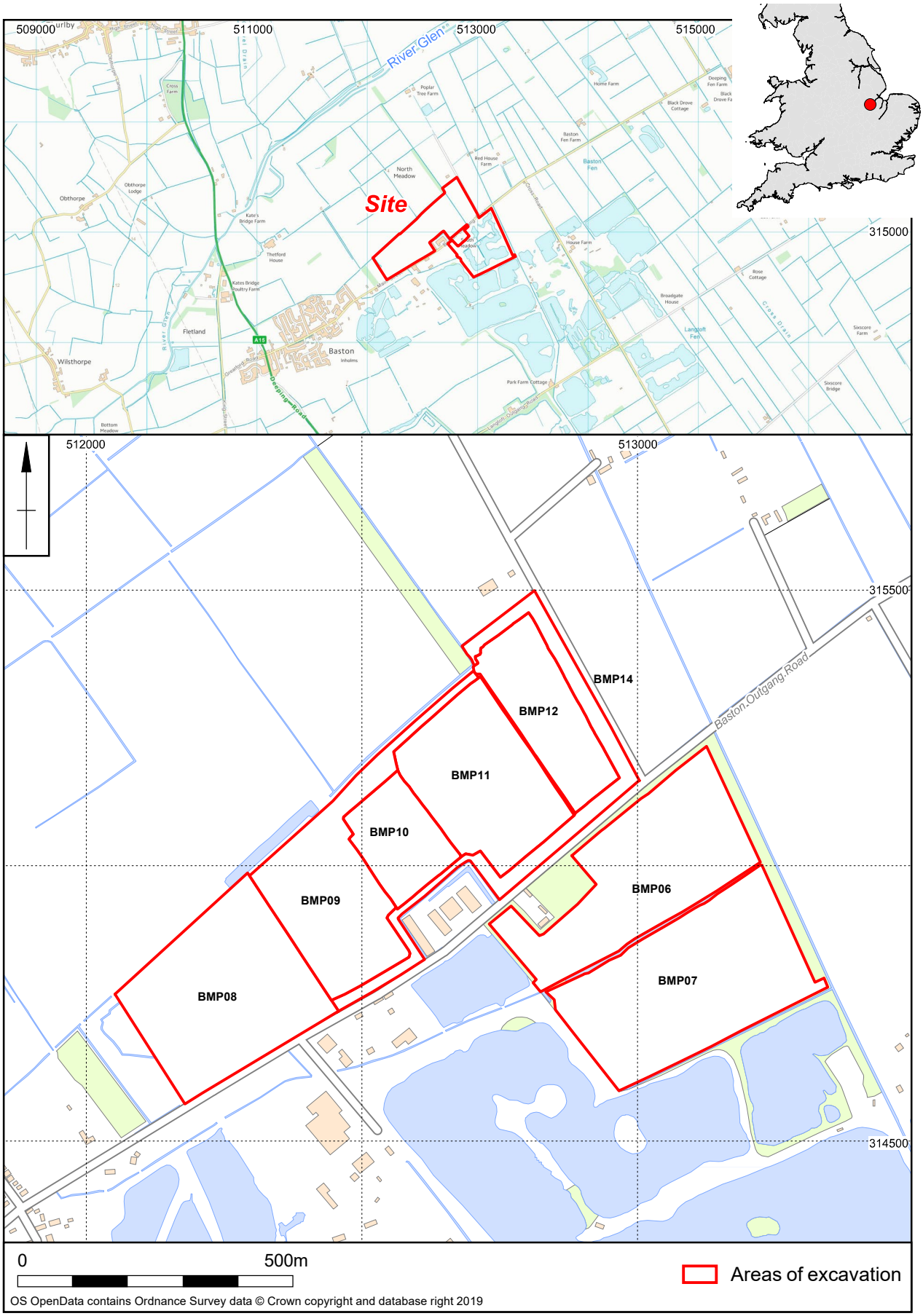

Figure 1.1. Excavation areas

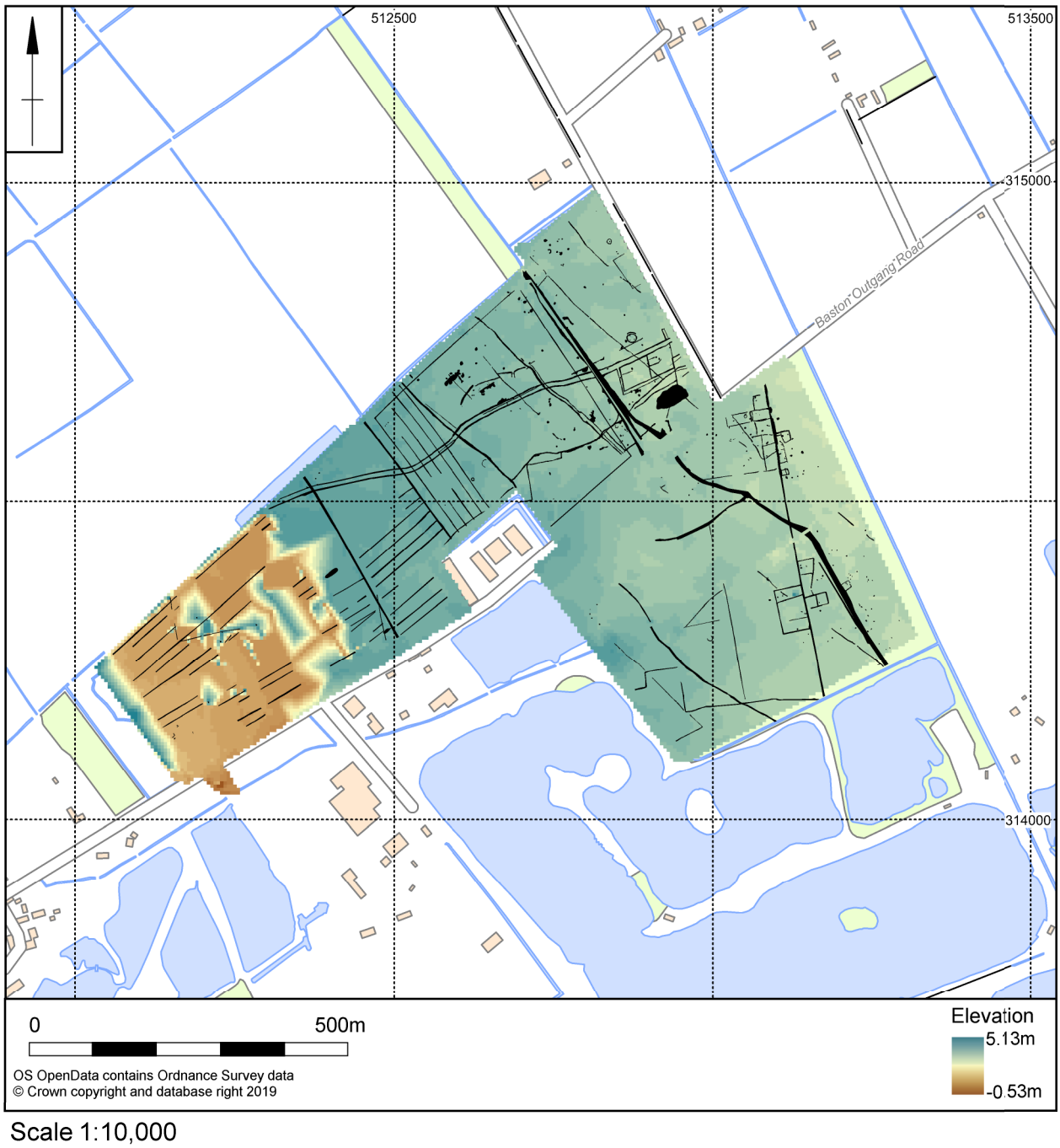

Figure 1.2. Elevation plan

The evidence from Baston Manor Pit has been put into a local and regional context in the Discussion partly using the results of the other excavations and this cropmark evidence.

Previous site investigations within Baston Manor Pit

Desk-based assessment

A desk-based assessment was undertaken by John Samuels Archaeological Consultants (JSAC 2002). This determined that although no significant archaeological finds were known from the proposed development site itself, it lay within an area that contained remains largely dating from the prehistoric and Roman periods. It concluded that there was medium potential for undiscovered archaeological remains to exist within the development area.

Geophysical survey by John Walford

Geophysical magnetic susceptibility survey was undertaken over the entire 56ha of the application site by Northamptonshire Archaeology in 2002. This identified ten areas of magnetic enhancement (Fig

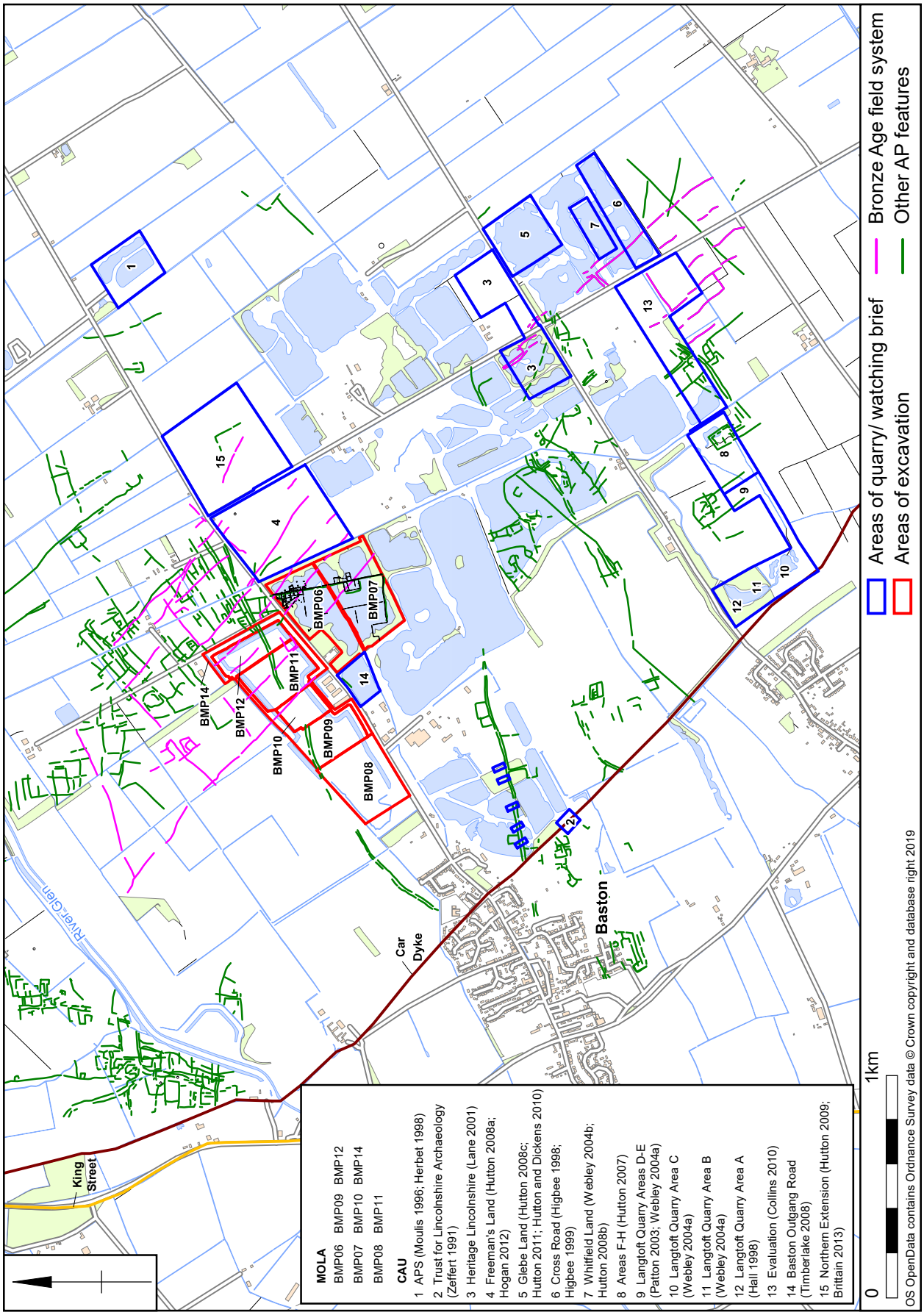

Figure 1.3. Aerial photographic plot (courtesy of Lincolnshire HER) overlaid by excavations

Figure 1.4. Aerial photograph of the landscape around the development area in the present day

1.5). Three of these were linear anomalies which were thought likely to represent former field boundaries. Seven other areas of irregular anomalies were thought to reflect human activity, although this could not be determined from the survey itself. Subsequently six blocks of 1ha were subject to detailed magnetometry (NA 2002; Fig 1.6). The results of these blocks were 'mixed' (i.e. they confirmed the presence of some anomalies highlighted in the magnetic enhancement but not others). Overall, however, the provisional survey results did not indicate a great density of sub-surface features in the areas sampled.

Fieldwalking survey

A surface artefact collection (fieldwalking) survey was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology in two stages (Upson-Smith 2003 and Morris 2004). This identified a significant density of Roman pottery and tile in the north-eastern corner of the site; elsewhere minor scatters of worked flint and medieval pottery appeared to represent a general background of activity (Fig 1.7).

Trial excavation

A trial trench evaluation by Northamptonshire Archaeology (Morris 2004) comprised the excavation of 98 trenches (Fig 1.8). This identified remains dating from the later prehistoric to the post-medieval period. These included Iron Age pits and Roman enclosures and associated field systems. Finds of any period were not prolific, with the exception of several interesting objects that were recovered from ditch [7512] in Trench 75, comprising two Roman copper alloy mounts. The palaeo-environmental samples indicated that waterlogging was present in a number of the deeper features with the potential for environmental information therefore being high.

Excavation areas 2006-2014

The excavation strategy was set out in a Project Design prepared by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA 2006) following a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by The Guildhouse Consultancy (2005). This report zoned the site into areas of archaeological potential for which differing levels of response were to be enacted. The work mostly consisted of a seasonal programme of stripping designed to release new areas for extraction as well as a small watching brief area in 2013 (Fig 1.7). The archaeological work in each of the years varied in size (see below).

The 2006-2008 excavations comprised three separate excavations in distinct areas and were reported on in 2010 (Yates and Field 2010). Interim reports were prepared after the 2009 and 2010 excavations (Field 2009; Burke 2010) and a summary report on the 2011 and 2012 works (NA 2013).

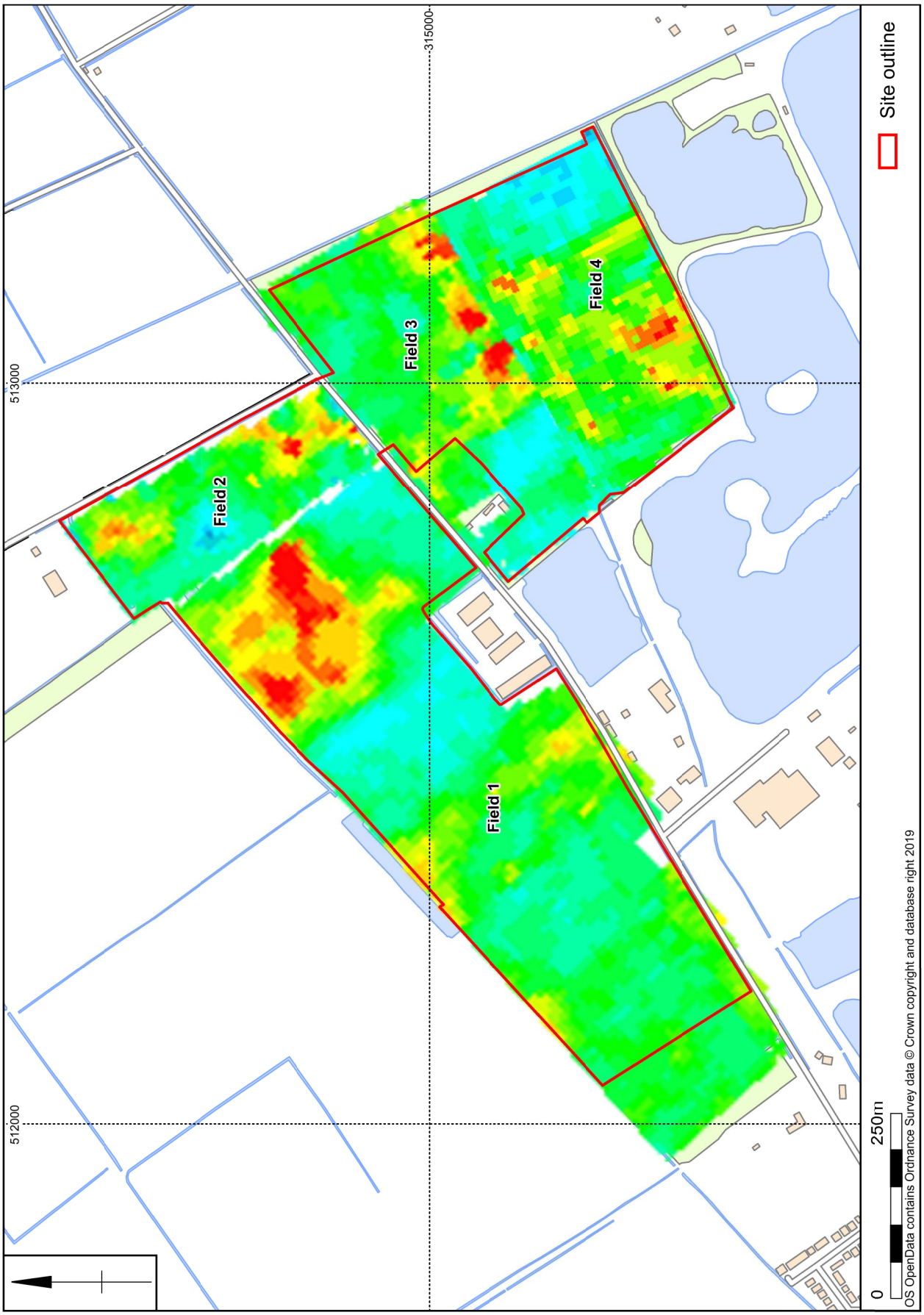

Figure 1.5. Geophysical magnetic susceptibility survey (NA 2002)

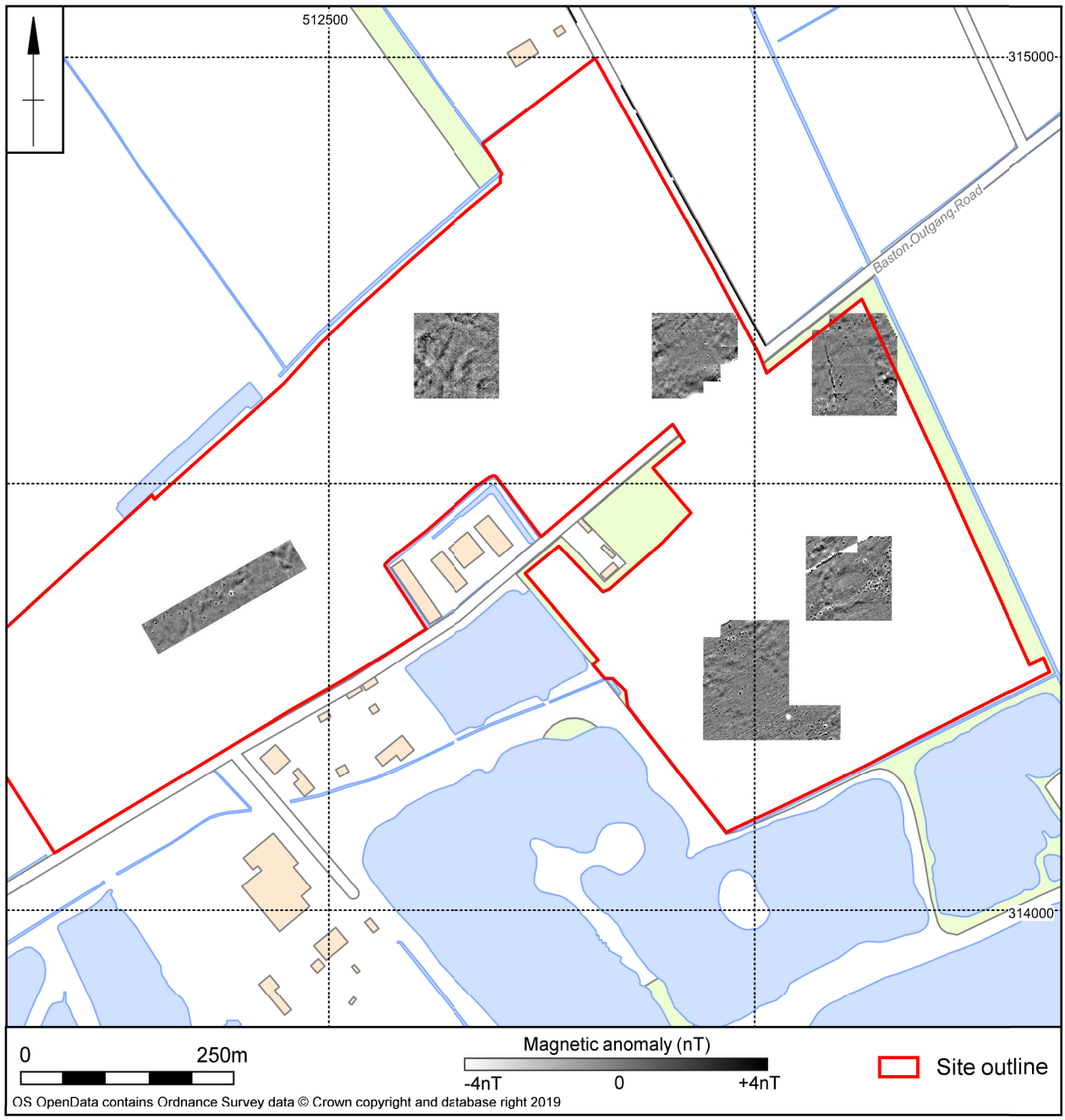

Figure 1.6. Geophysical magnetometry survey (NA 2002)

The total development area (2006-2014) excavated comprised 49.65ha. The areas examined between 2006 and 2014 are detailed below (Figs 1.1 and 1.7).

A post-medieval sheep dip was found at the extreme northern part of the site. After it had been recorded it was backfilled with soil and as a result of its discovery this structure was intended for preservation *in situ.*

Methodology

In all areas the removal of the topsoil and other overburden was carried out by a tracked 360-degree mechanical excavator, fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, operating under archaeological supervision. Mechanical excavation proceeded to the natural substrate or the first significant archaeological horizon.

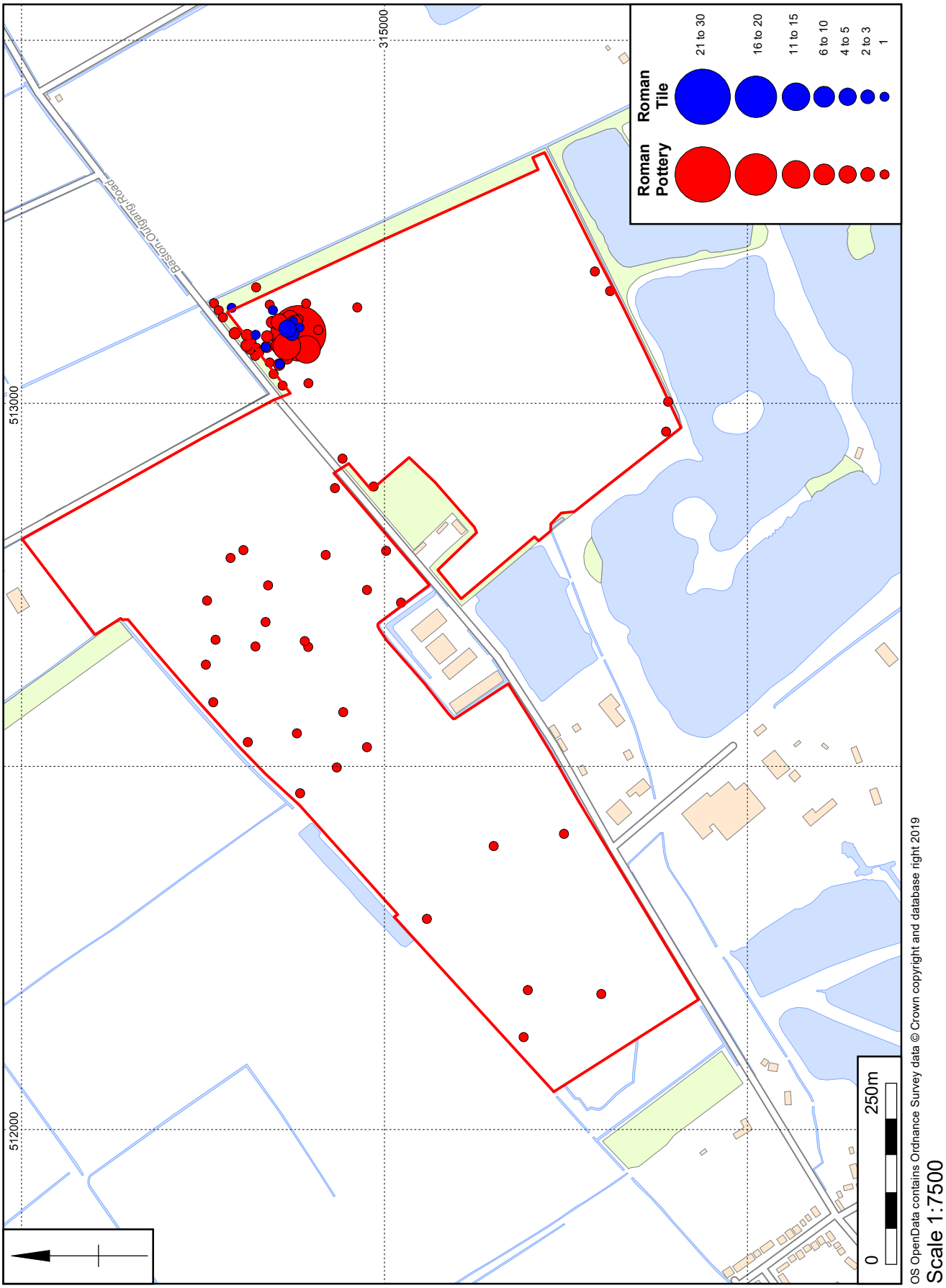

Figure 1.7. Fieldwalking (Roman pottery and tile) (Upson-Smith 2003 and Morris 2004)

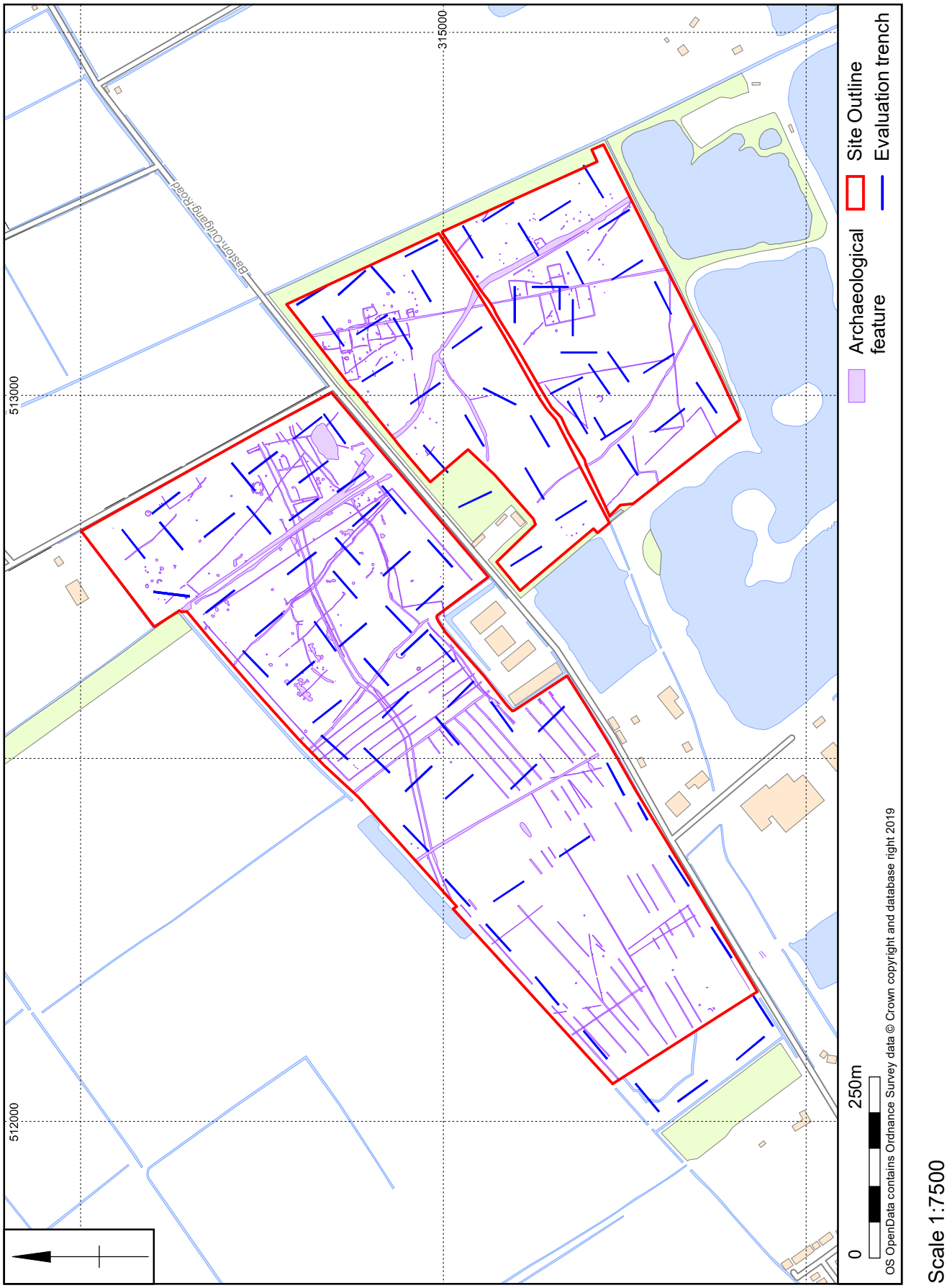

Figure 1.8. Excavation features and evaluation trenches (Morris 2004)

Table 1.1: Site codes and locations

Site code	Area (ha)	Location	Grid Ref (centred)	Year
BMP06	8.43	Almost the entirety of the field to the south of Baston Outgang Road.	TF 13020 14974	2006
BMP07	9.99	Immediately south of the 2006 excavations	TF 13091 14796	2007
BMP08	8.61	North of Baston Outgang Road, 300m to the west of the 2006/7 excavations	TF 12245 14771	2008
BMP09	6.28	North of Baston Outgang Road, directly to the east of the 2008 excavations.	TF 12433 14928	2009
BMP10	2.77	Immediately east of the 2009 excavations	TF 12551 15079	2010
BMP11	6.29	Immediately east of the 2010 excavations.	TF 12760 15199	2011
BMP12	4.04	Immediately east of the 2011 excavations.	TF 12854 15282	2012
BMP14	3.24	On the extreme eastern side of Area 3, directly to the north of Baston Outgang Road	TF 12817 15018	2014

Figure 1.9. Site affected by flooding in 2012, looking north-west

All archaeological and potential archaeological features were investigated. Standard Northamptonshire Archaeology recording procedures were employed (NA 2003). Works were conducted in accordance with *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Excavation* (1994, revised 2001) and the *Code of Conduct* (1985, revised 2000) of the Institute for Archaeologists (now the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists). All work was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Project Design (NA 2006).

The archaeological remains were moderately truncated, although some shallow features survived including ring ditches. Deeper features were generally waterlogged at their base with wood surviving in some. The ground was low lying and was prone to flooding during the excavations (Fig 1.9). Across the excavation area there was a mixed density of features, with parts busy and intercutting and parts which were fairly blank of remains (Fig 1.10).

There were two main excavation areas with the northern parts comprising (BMP08-BMP14) and the southern area (BMP06-07) with a road (Baston Outgang Road) between the two areas (Fig 1.1). Some of the middle Bronze Age features cross between the two main excavation areas, but the two Roman settlements are located in the different areas. Mostly the archaeological remains are described in Chapter 2 by period and separated between the areas, apart from instances where features can be demonstrated to relate across both areas.

The archaeological work took place in all weather conditions including a tornado which struck the site on Thursday 17th August 2006 when staff was within a portable cabin. This event was recorded in the BBC news, "a tornado lifted a portable building into the air in south Lincolnshire...archaeologists ... were working inside a sand and gravel pit at Baston, near the Cambridgeshire border, on Thursday, when it hit. Four people were taken to Peterborough Hospital in Cambridgeshire with minor injuries, after the building was lifted up by high winds and dragged 70 feet." (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/lincolnshire/5261198.stm).

Site phasing

The excavations demonstrated the presence of human activity on the site from the Neolithic through to modern times (see Chapter 2). The chronological sequence has been summarised in Table 1.2 below.

Table 1.2: Site chronology

Period	**Description**
Late Mesolithic to early Neolithic	Residual flint
Early Bronze Age (Period 2, Phase 1)	Three pits and a possible well pit
Middle Bronze Age (Period 2, Phase 2)	Extensive field system, settlements, pits and well pits
Roman (Period 3, Phase 1: 2nd century)	Linear ditch and associated enclosures
Roman (Period 3, Phase 2: 3rd to early 4th centuries)	Later enclosures, burials
Medieval	Trackway, enclosure, fields
Medieval to post-medieval (15th to mid 17th centuries)	Field system

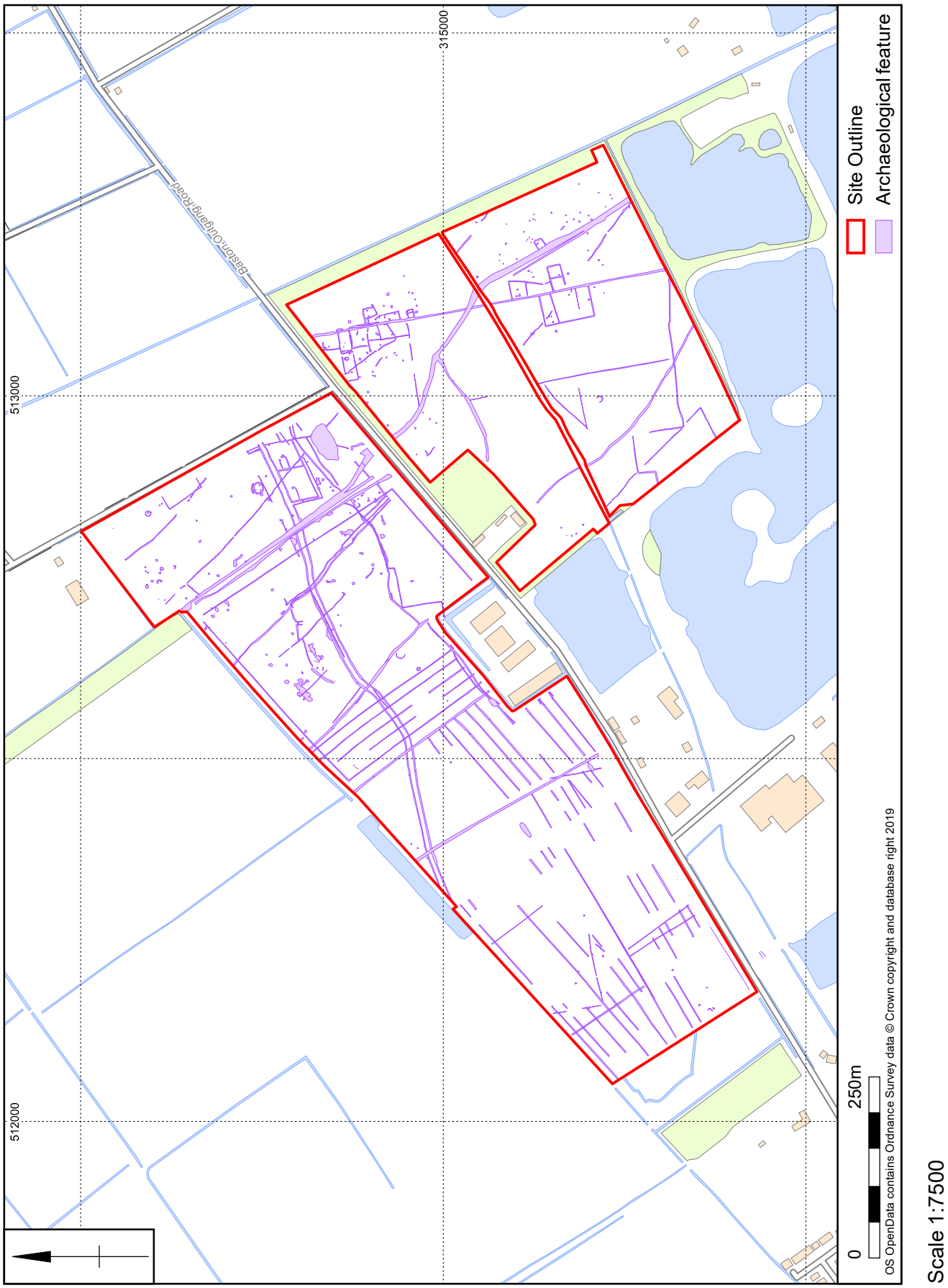

Figure 1.10. All features plan