Leadketty: Fieldwalking LK13.01

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Introduction

The SERF excavations at Leadketty for 2013 are to be centred on cropmark features recorded at Canmore (ID26621; NGR 02081 16121) as a putative Neolithic causewayed enclosure. Other features include what have tentatively been interpreted from aerial photographs as a pit circle and unenclosed settlement.

The fieldwalking, which was carried out by a small team of five on 21 March 2013, focused on part of the area of the field where excavations are to be undertaken in June-July 2013.

Previously fieldwalking had taken place in this field at Leadketty in 1994, 1995 and 1997 (centred NO 02033 15857) and the adjacent field in 1993 (centred NO 02038 16160), which resulted in the recovery of largely non-diagnostic lithic material and a sherd of prehistoric pottery (Henson 1997; cf. Wright 2012). The artefacts are in the collections of Perth Museum and Art Gallery. In 2007 the University of Glasgow also carried out fieldwalking at Leadketty recovering a small assemblage of lithic material. Once again, none of the lithics are diagnostic.

In August 2012 SERF opened up three trenches in the adjacent field immediately to the south (centred NO 02033 15857). The trenches focused on a Neolithic timber structure (LK12.01), a Bronze Age henge (LK12.02), and part of the avenue and perimeter to the Neolithic palisaded enclosure (LK12.03). LK12.01 and LK12.02 were situated within the palisaded enclosure. Sherds of Late Neolithic grooved ware pottery were recovered from secure contexts at LK12.01 and LK12.03. A total of 69 lithics were recovered from the three trenches (cf. Brophy *et al*. 2012).

Aims and objectives

The aim of the fieldwalking was to recover by surface collection lithics, prehistoric pottery, metalwork and artefacts diagnostic to the Early Medieval period.

Methodology

Due to time constraints and adverse weather conditions a decision was made not to set up grid squares. A point was taken using a Garmin® GPSMap® 62S, with a resolution of 3-5m, representing the south-east corner of the proposed grid. The three students present had no previous experience of fieldwalking and as such were set at 1m, 3m and 5m, each covering 2m laterally. Dr Brophy took up position at the 7m point. The writer followed behind the 8m line to ensure that no artefacts had been missed. A point was taken at the north-east corner of the grid. For the final transect, points were taken at the north-west and south-west to complete the recording of the grid of the area walked of 6975m^2 (Figure 1).

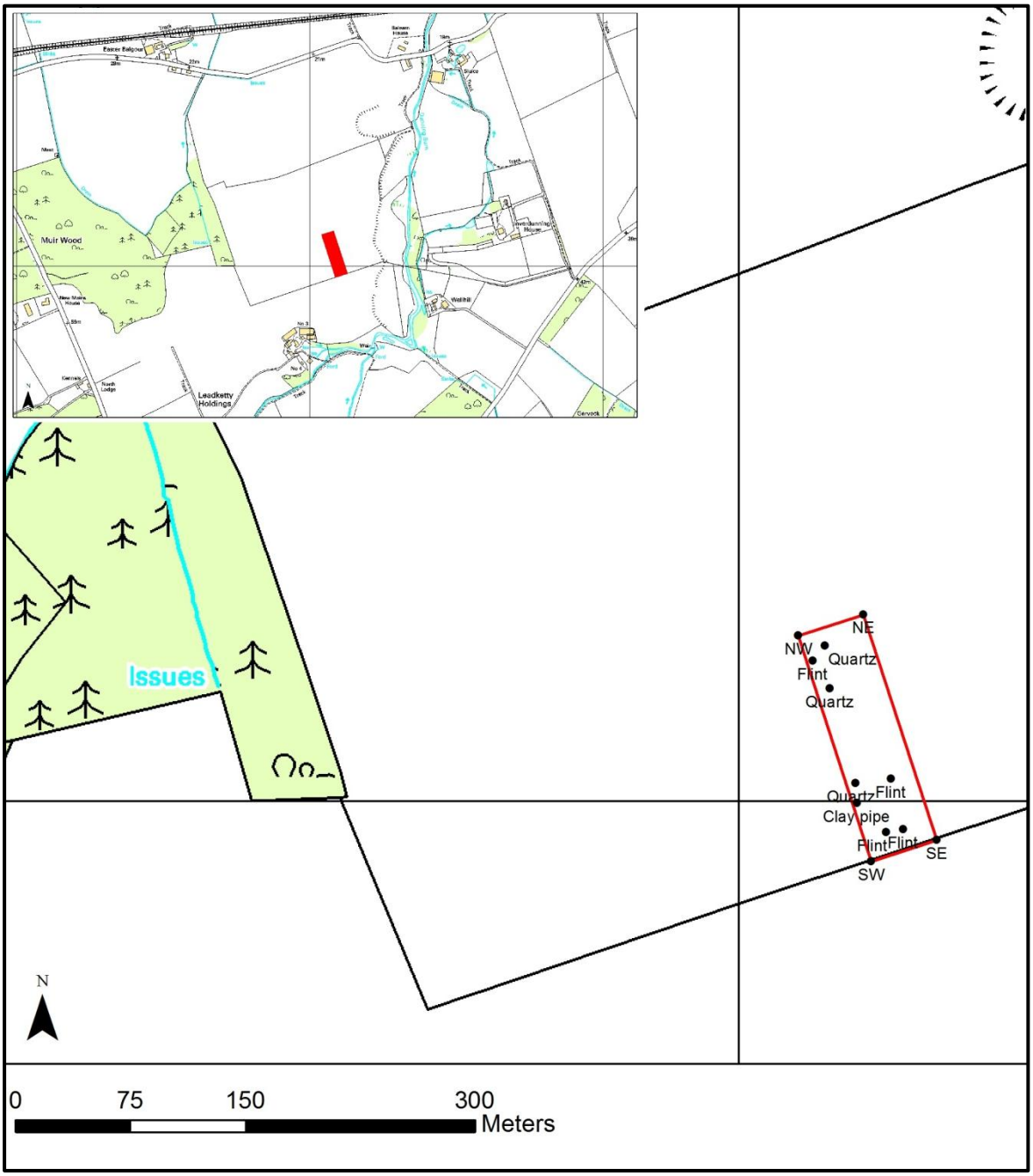

Figure 1: Map of area walked and distribution of collected artefacts at Leadketty. Background Ordnance Survey Map from EDINA Digimap®; © University of Edinburgh and Crown copyright/database right 2013.

The fieldwalkers placed pin flags to highlight material to be examined. All artefacts were allocated a unique number with eastings and northings plotted using the GPS and bagged. All data was entered on the fieldwalking recording sheet. A finds recording card was completed and placed in the bag with the artefact.

Results

There was a paucity of finds. Flint artefacts included a short flared convex scraper, scraper fragment, blade and a chunk. The only other lithics were quartz comprising of a bipolar core, bipolar core rejuvenation flake and a bipolar tested split pebble (Figure 1). Scrapers are common artefacts in the assemblages of later prehistory (cf. Finlay *et al*. 2000a, 583), however, the small flint scraper with semi- invasive retouch may indicate a Bronze Age event (after Edmonds 1995, 159-160; Hardy and Wickham-Jones 2007). None of the other lithics were categorically diagnostic to an archaeological epoch.

A fragment of the bowl of a clay pipe was also collected. The letters 'G L' are inscribed on the bowl.

Figure 2: Fieldwalking on a bitterly cold day in Spring 2013 at Leadketty. In the middle ground is the field where the 2012 SERF excavations were undertaken. The background shows the Ochils covered in snow. Photograph taken by Dr Kenny Brophy from the north © University of Glasgow.

Conclusion

The fieldwalking team spent only five hours in the field due to severe adverse weather conditions. The relatively small area (6975m^2) covered may be explained by the number of personnel involved and their inexperience. However, as a training exercise the day went very well. For future fieldwalking, personnel will be set at intervals of at least five metres as opposed to the two metres adopted for this exercise.

The methodology employed has proved to be successful with a significant time-savings in not having to set up 10m² grid squares. The tolerance level of 3-5m achieved by the GPS is more than adequate for the surface collection of material from scattered locations. A greater resolution will be required where high densities of artefactual material are located.

The original intention, following this largely training exercise, was that field LK13.01 together with the adjacent field (SERF 2012), should be subject to complete fieldwalking survey in either autumn 2013 or spring 2014. However, due to the lack of typologically diagnostic finds we should, following the 2013 excavations, re-assess the potential impact of walking these fields. Other potential targets should include those fields to the west of SERF 2012 across Dunning Burn at Wellhill which do not previously appear to have been a focus for fieldwalking.

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