

Fieldwalking at Cottam 1994 (COT94F)

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1. Introduction

During the winter of 1994 students from the Department of Archaeology at the University of York undertook a fieldwalking exercise near to Cottam Grange (SE 987 656) on the Yorkshire Wolds over an area suspected to evidence past human activity.

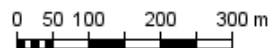
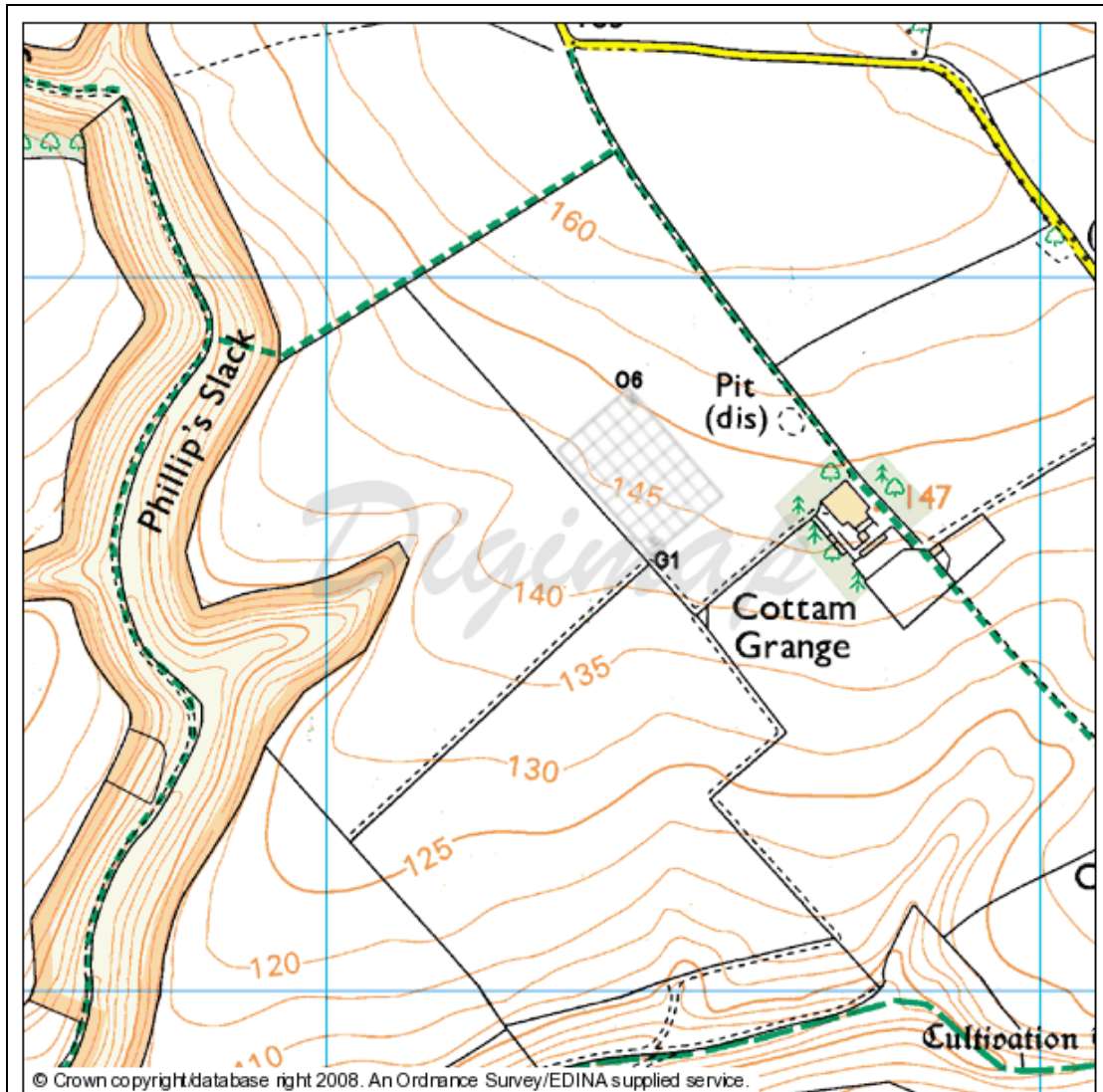
A total of 48 30 x 30 metre squares were systematically walked with the squares forming a large 8 (240 m) x 6 (180 m) rectangle in a field directly N and W of the Grange (fig. 1). The base line for this rectangle ran parallel with a SE – NW hedge line directly west of the Grange. The southernmost origin point for this base line was 10 m in from the hedge line opposite to where another hedge line from the SW joins the SE – NW one at a right angle. The transects away from the base line were coded G to O (with I omitted - possibly to avoid confusion) starting from the origin with the grid squares numbered sequentially along each transect; thus G1, G2 and so on.

It is not clear as to whether a discard policy was in place but the assemblage appears fairly inclusive including snail shells and modern glass.

As catalogued within a database the assemblage contained 1,360 artefacts and ecofacts. These were grouped under the following material types

- Bone
- Ceramic
- Glass
- Leather
- Metal
- Shell
- Slag
- Snail
- Stone

Of these the ceramic assemblage is the most important as pottery shards are relatively easy in the main to visually assign to archaeological periods. Thus the pottery assemblage was further catalogued by fabric type and period. Distributions by period are considered below. The other material is not so easily dated with distributions by material only considered below.



This map is drawn on the GB National Grid.

Heights (if given) are in metres above Newlyn datum.

The representation of a road, track or path is no evidence of a right of way.

The alignment of tunnels is approximate.

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Fig. 1 COT94F fieldwalking grid location

2. Ceramics

This consisted of 829 items; mostly pottery but including small amount of tile, brick and daub. The fabric series is mostly defined in Austin (1999) and Jelley & Austin (2007) and references therein.

2.1 Iron Age pottery

A total of 65 shards with a Calcite Gritted fabric were assigned to the Iron Age. Pottery in this fabric can be assigned to the Early Iron / Late Bronze Age through to the post Roman period. However; certain diagnostic features change over time. These features include wall thickness (gets thinner), firing improvements (harder, reduced), developing rim forms culminating in the distinctive hooked rim of the wheel thrown Huntcliffe ware of the Late Roman period.

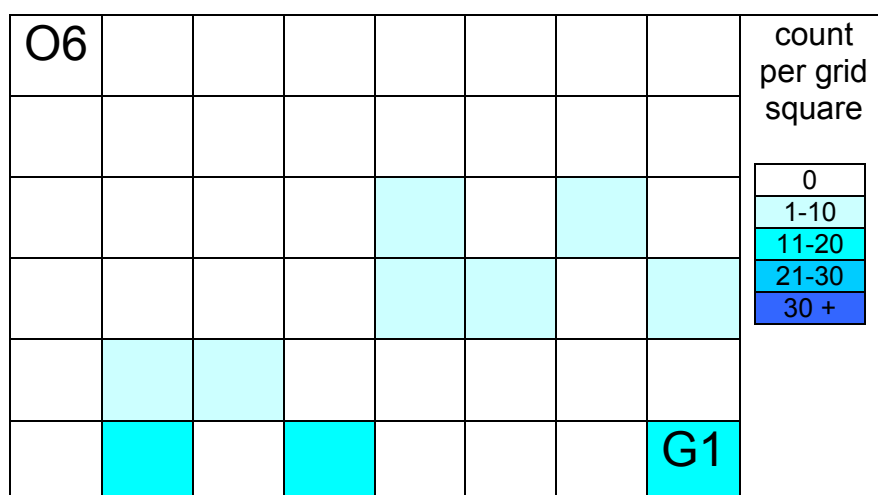


Fig. 2 Iron Age pottery distribution

The distribution is clearly concentrated along the SE – NW hedge line and seeming to peter out towards the NE and NW.

2.2 Undated Calcite Gritted Wares

A significant group of shards (139) that are clearly within the long tradition of calcite gritted wares (see above) could not be assigned to either the Iron Age or the Roman period (and beyond – see below) because of insufficient diagnostic features.

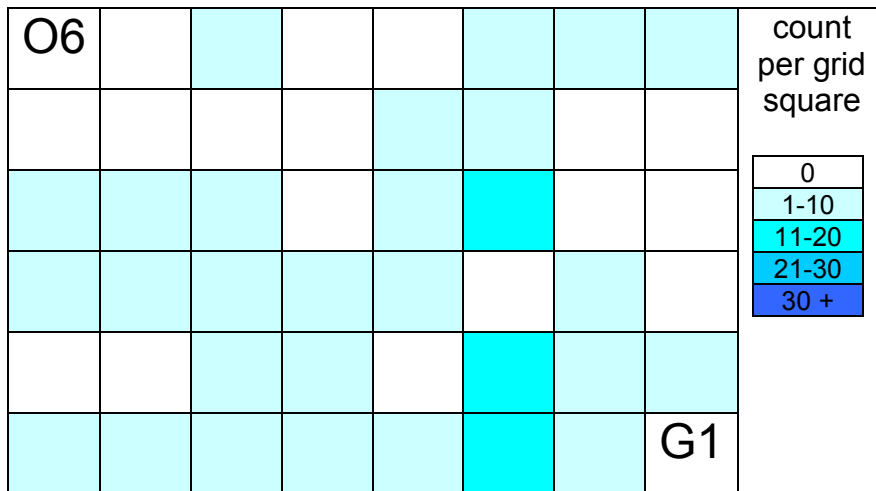


Fig. 3 Undated Calcite Gritted Wares distribution

The much wider distribution compared to that of the Iron Age material above suggests most of these shards might be Roman.

2.3 Roman pottery

The Roman pottery assemblage is dominated by coarse wares mainly Calcite Gritted wares (97), East Yorkshire Grey wares (218) and Crambeck ware (15). The only finer ware noted was a small amount of Samian (6). In general the Roman assemblage seems earlier than the nearby Roman site at Burrow House Farm (Austin 1999). East Yorkshire Grey wares dominate the assemblage and only one Huntcliffe shard was identified.

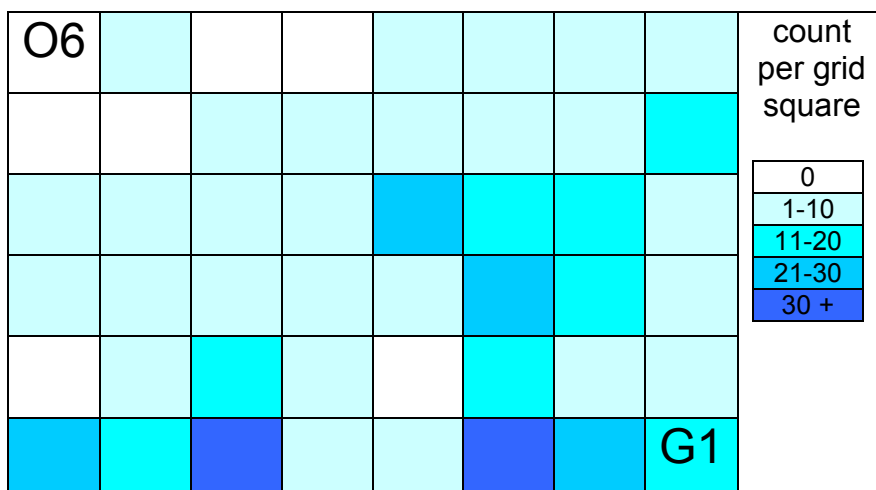


Fig. 4 Roman pottery distribution

Like the Iron Age pottery distribution the Roman material is concentrated along the SE – NW hedge line but there is also a distinctive cluster of shards centred on J3. There is a scatter of Roman material over most of the site but it is clearly lessening towards the North.

2.4 Sub Roman or Anglian pottery

Two shards within the assemblage had distinctive deeply incised zigzag decoration and are thought to be 5-6th century in date. The fabric of these shards appears visually similar to the earlier Calcite Gritted fabrics noted above. This suggests that some of the material identified as Roman could be undecorated shards from later vessels. However, the restricted distribution of these decorated shards suggests that the Roman identification is likely to be right in most cases.

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|----|--|--|--|--|--|--|----|-----------------------------|
| O6 | | | | | | | | count per grid square |
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| | | | | | | | | |
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| | | | | | | | G1 | |

Fig. 5 Sub Roman or Anglian pottery distribution



Fig. 6 5 – 6th century decorated shard from N2 (scale mm)

2.5 Medieval pottery

A total of 92 shards were assigned a Medieval date mostly because of the presence of greenish glazing. They were spread sparingly over most of the area investigated though again appearing to lessen to the North and West.

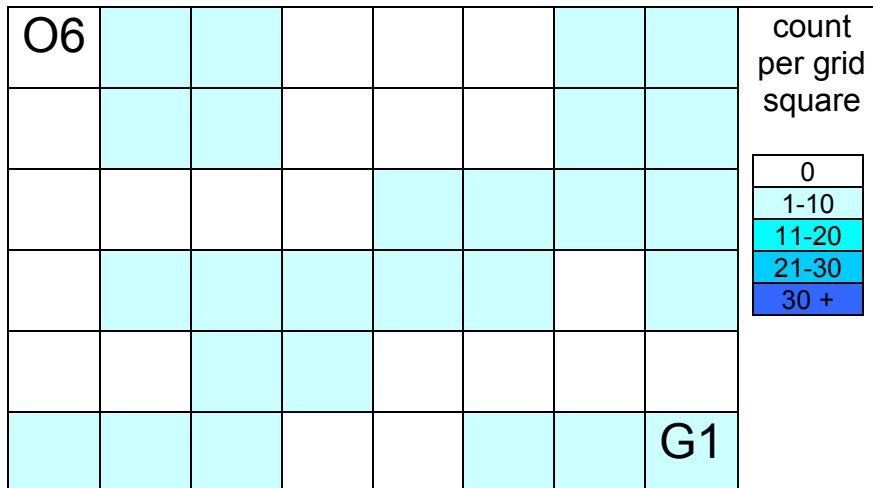


Fig. 7 Medieval pottery distribution

This sort of distribution is commonly thought to represent the spreading of manure from midden perhaps from the area of the Grange.

2.6 Post Medieval pottery

There was also a similar if smaller distribution of Post Medieval shards (36) probably representing the same processes proposed for the Medieval material.

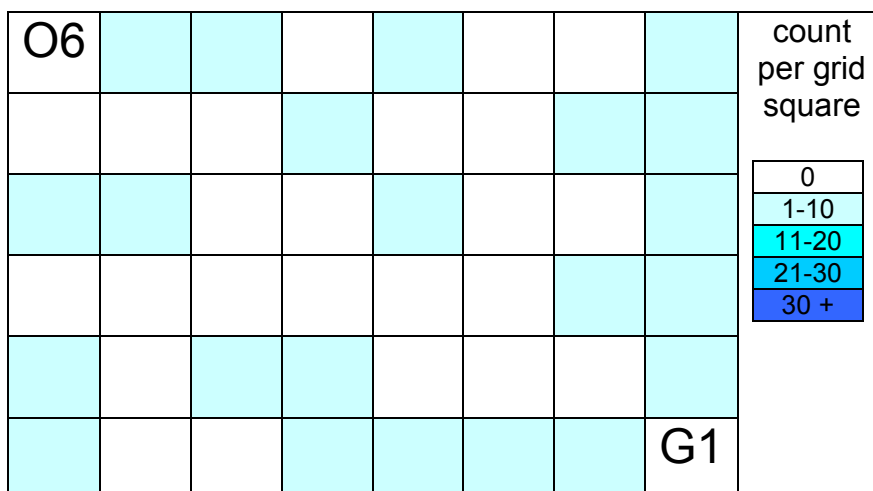


Fig. 8 Post Medieval pottery distribution

3. Other material

A total of 531 non ceramic items were collected.

3.1 Bone including teeth

161 bone or bone fragments were recovered including some that evidenced burning.

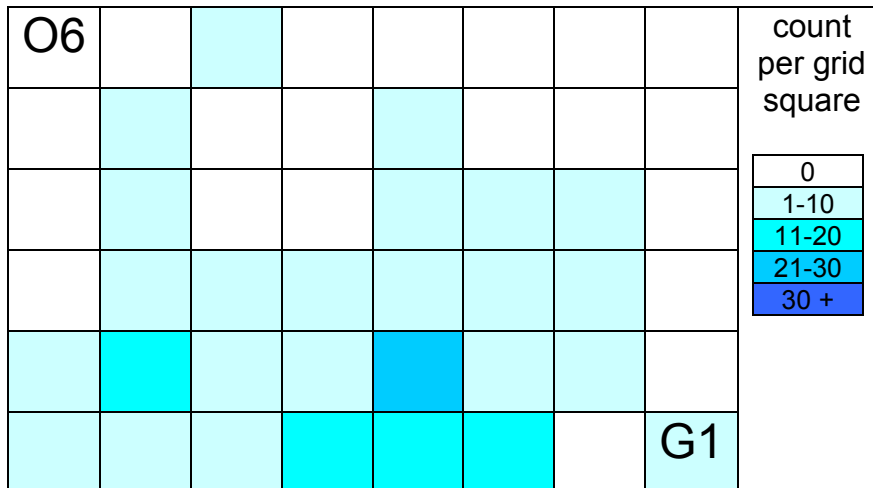


Fig. 9 Bone (including teeth) distribution

The distribution could be argued as resulting from the spread of midden as manure. However; there is a significant concentration centred on K2 in the areas towards the hedge line which may indicate plough damage to buried features. It should also be noted that a fragment of worked bone; possibly a comb fragment, was found in H3 just to the NW of this cluster.

3.2 Shell

9 of the 10 pieces of shell identified were thought to be oyster shell. This may be significant as these shells are often found in Roman contexts.

The distribution of these shells also appears significant in corresponding to the areas where concentrations of Roman pottery were noted above.

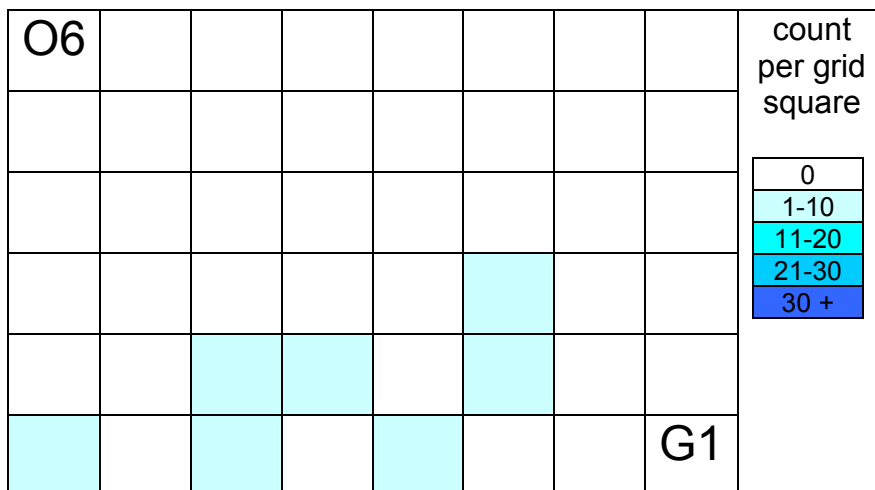


Fig. 10 Distribution of shell

3.3 Slag

A total of 1,071 pieces of slag were noted. The distribution is concentrated towards the southern corner of the survey area; specifically on the grid square G2 which contained 62 pieces of slag.

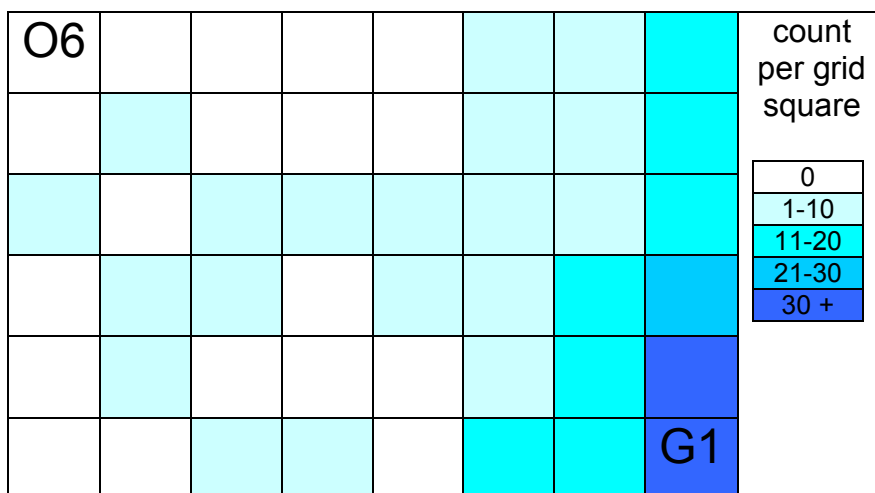


Fig. 11 Distribution of slag

Clearly something significant but as yet undated is evidenced in this southern area.

3.4 Glass

Some of the 35 pieces of glass collected appears pre Modern including a piece of decorated glass possibly of Roman date (H1). All glass is included below. Considering the wide but sparse distribution it seems reasonable to suggest that much of the pre modern glass may represent the use midden as

manure. The possible Roman shard just noted may represent plough damage to underlying archaeology

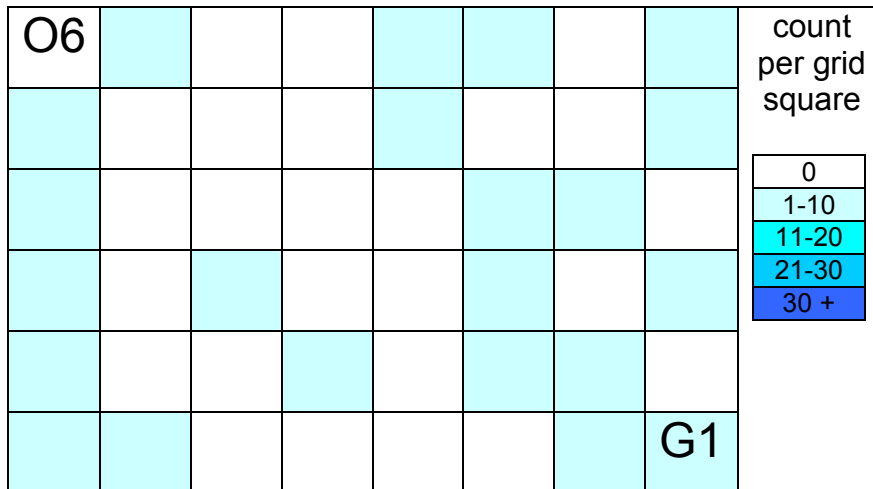


Fig. 12 Distribution of glass

3.5 Metal

A total of 10 metal objects were collected. Most were unidentified iron objects but included two nails. There were three examples of possible gunshot and a small triangular copper alloy object. As such the distribution below of such disparate and undated objects is unlikely to have significance.

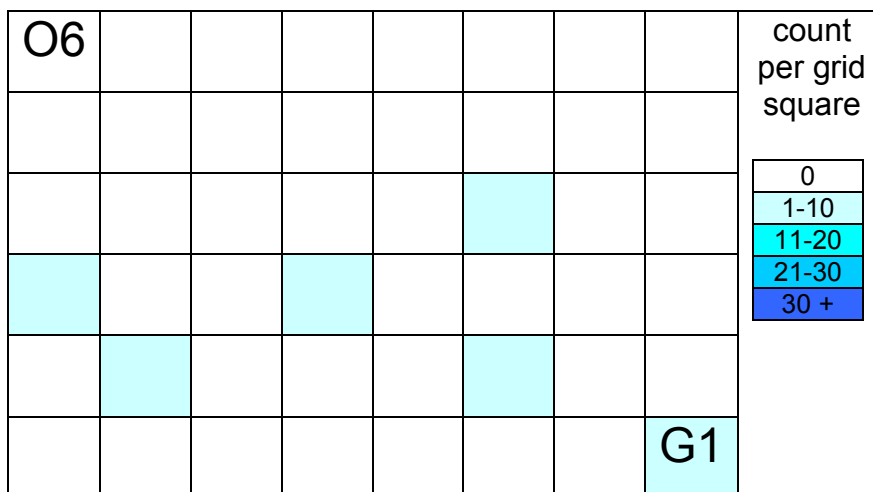


Fig. 13 Distribution of metal objects

3.6 Stone

23 Stone objects were collected. 10 of these were identified as Ironstone or broken up iron panning which occurs commonly on the Wolds. The remaining 13 appear to have been affected culturally and include burnt flint (1), slate (3),

burnt stone (4), stone with possible knife sharpening marks (1), worked stone (2) and a possible fragment of marble. None of these are datable although there might be a slight significance that they are concentrated towards the SW of the search area.

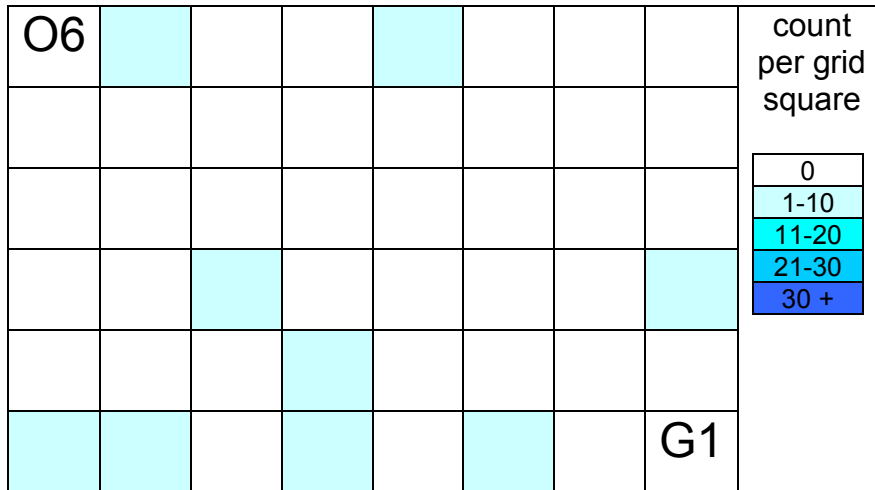


Fig. 14 Distribution of stone objects

Snail (3) and leather (1) were not considered significant

Overview

The patterning of the Iron Age and Roman material suggest evidence of increasing activity towards the SE – NW hedge line which formed the base line of the survey. The significant amounts of slag towards the southern corner of the survey area suggest some sort of undated metal working activity in the vicinity. The presence of two decorated post Roman shards could hint at cremation urns in the vicinity of the grid square N2. The distributions relating to later activity appears confined to agricultural practice or casual loss.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Andy Copp whose 14 year old note and map helped locate the survey and described the methodology employed.

Bibliography

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Jelley, E. & Austin, T. 2007. 'Cottam A: Excavations in 1996 (COT96E): The Pottery', Unpub. report (University of York)

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