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Archaeological Watching Brief

**Smaws Quarry
Tadcaster
North Yorkshire**

1994

SMAWS QUARRY TADCASTER
Archaeological Watching Brief
1994

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Abstract

A geophysical survey of the proposed extension area to Smaws Quarry in 1992 had indicated the presence of anomalies indicative of ditches and pits (Shiel 1992). The area of the geophysical survey was topsoil stripped under archaeological supervision by A E Finney of MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd. All the anomalies shown on the survey were of a geological nature: apart from a random scatter of pottery ranging in date from the prehistoric to modern period and a number of flint artefacts, no archaeological features were located. During a further watching of the topsoil stripping of the quarry site in 1993, further prehistoric material was located and in this instance a number of areas of burning were also recognised. In view of the continuing prehistoric presence in the vicinity of the quarry a further watching brief was undertaken in 1994 in the area directly to the north of the area observed in 1992 and 1993.

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Introduction

The site of Smaws Quarry (NGR SE 4625 4300) is situated in the parish of Tadcaster West, to the west of the town of Tadcaster and to the north of the Ilkley to Tadcaster road (A 659), and to the east of Rudgate (Fig. 1). Both the A659 and Rudgate are believed to follow the course of Roman roads.

Aerial photographic reconnaissance of the area surrounding the quarry has indicated the presence of an enclosure to the south-west of the site and a further series of cropmark enclosures and trackways to the east. Although to date no archaeological assessment of these sites have been undertaken to determine their exact nature.

The geology of the site is shallow brown calcareous earths of the Aberford Association overlying the upper Magnesian Limestone of the Permian age (Jarvis et al., 1984; Mackney et al 1983).

In accordance with the planning constraint placed on Redland Aggregates an archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the topsoil stripping of an area measuring approximately 240m by 28m (Fig. 2).

All work has been funded by Redland Aggregates.

Excavation Methods and Techniques

The site was mechanically topsoil stripped using an Ackerman with a 1.2m wide toothless bucket. The stripped area was then shovel scraped and selected areas were trowelled. The fenceline to the north of the area was used as a baseline for surveying in the distribution of finds.

Finds located within Layer 2 exposed by the stripping process are displayed by artefact category (Figs. 3 & 4). An overall depiction of the finds distribution at the site is shown in Figure 5.

Excavation Results

The topsoil a silty sandy clay loam (layer 1) varied in depth over the site from 0.04m to 0.35m. This layer sealed a stone free sandy clay loam with charcoal flecks (layer 2), which again varied in depth from 0.18m in the west and central portion of the site, decreasing to 0.03m at the extreme eastern end of the site.

There was evidence for archaeological features on the site, in the form of three localised patches of burning which may represent occasional fires. No artefacts were found associated with the features and therefore the dating proves problematic. In addition the remains of building walls were located in the extreme west of the site and work on this area is the subject of an additional report (MAP forthcoming).

Material recovered from the 1994 watching brief of Smaws Quarry again indicate man's presence and use of this piece of land from the prehistoric period through to modern times (Fig 3). During the 1994 season, the pottery located shows no dominant period. Large quantities of modern pottery were not observed which is in direct contrast to the 1993 season (Appendix 2). Only a small amount of post-medieval and medieval pottery were recovered. The Roman period is represented by 8 sherds of pottery (Fig. 3), 2 Samian sherds and a single colour coated sherd, the Samian dates to the 2nd century A.D. whereas the grey and calcite gritted wares are common from the 2nd to 4th century A.D. in date. Prehistoric activity at the site is illustrated by a number of flint artefacts (15 items) of which the assemblage consisted of 3 tools and 12 flakes, a ratio of tools to flakes of 1:4. Two categories of flint can be distinguished of which the most common type is mottled grey (14 items), and 1 of grey/brown translucent flint. Artefacts of the mottled type have a widespread distribution within the north of England, the nearest source of which is the Yorkshire Wolds. The high quality coloured translucent flint has a known source at Flamborough Head in Humberside.

The spatial occurrence of the flint assemblage is not reflected in the distribution of other artefacts collections at the site which appears to be of a more random nature and the result of modern manuring.

In addition to material discarded at knapping sites, flint tools enter the archaeological record through being discarded or lost at the places where they were used. Two broad categories of use may be conjectured, use during the process of raw materials and manufacture of equipment, and use during the procurement of resources. Examples of the former kind are scrapers and butchery knives, while arrowheads and sickle blades may be said to fall into the second category. Processing, manufacturing and maintenance often take place at settlements, while the procurement takes place

elsewhere (Smith forthcoming). The assemblage from the 1993 watching brief includes examples of the initial category but its small size hampers interpretation.

A consideration of the 1992 results (Figs 4 and 5) shows that the finds assemblage was dominated by prehistoric pottery which was absent from the 1994 results. The Roman assemblage consisted of 8 sherds of varied wares, but is of too small a sample to discuss. Medieval material consisted of 5 sherds and the later period is represented by 4 post medieval sherds.

The marked decrease in modern material in the assemblage is probably due to less intensive recent manuring in this area of the site. The distribution of the flint is most interesting in that the majority of the flint comes from the west of the site (Fig 5). with a marked concentration as shown in Figure 3.

Conclusions

During the supervision of the topsoil stripping the only features observed where two areas of burning, there was no associated stones etc to suggest that these features had once formed hearths and the intensity of the burning suggested that they only represented occasional fires. No finds were found in association and therefore it is impossible to date the features. The artefacts recorded ranged in date from the Bronze Age through to the modern day. The majority of the material recovered appears to date from the prehistoric period, with surprisingly only a small percentage of Roman material considering the close proximity of the site to two Roman roads. The absence of evidence for medieval presence at the site may suggest that the site was pasture or waste during this period and not used for arable cultivation. The post medieval and modern material observed are the direct result of manuring.

Consideration of the aerial photographic data illustrates clearly the high degree of known archaeological activity within the immediate area of Smaws Quarry although it is impossible to equate directly with the assemblages from the watching briefs, it is clear that there was prehistoric settlement close by.

Recommendations for further work

Due to the nature of the results from the previous three seasons of work at the quarry, it is recommended that a watching brief is also conducted in the remaining portion of land to the north-west of the area to be quarried in 1994-5.

6. Bibliography

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Figures

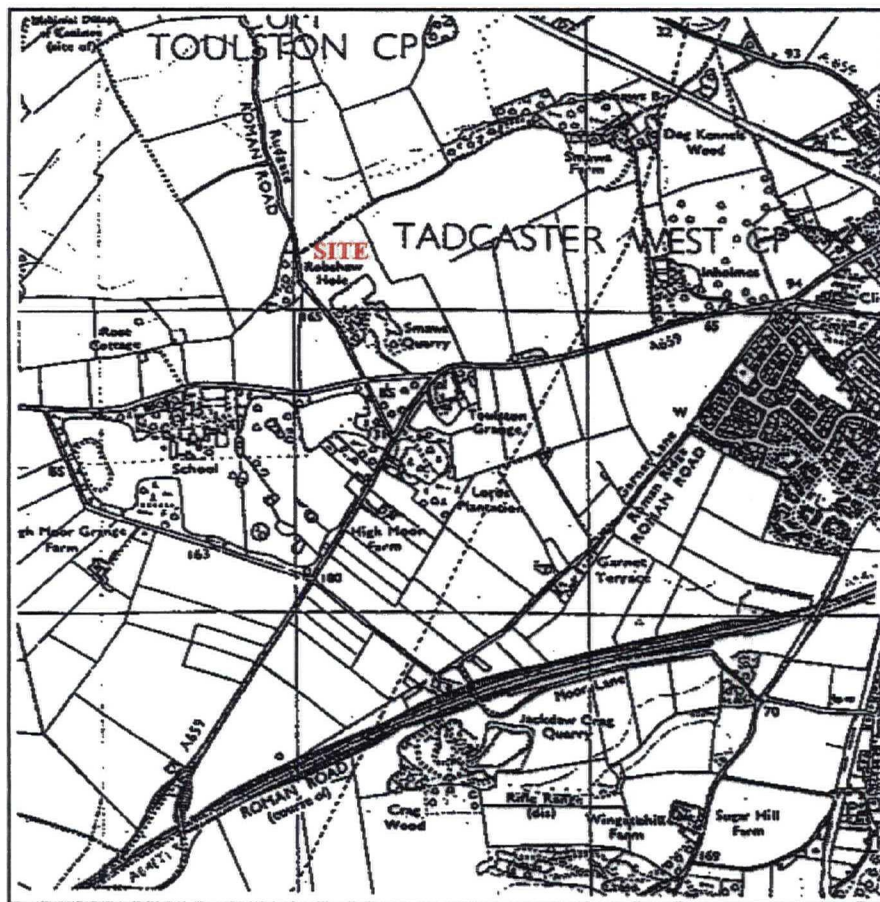


Figure 1 - Scale 1:25000

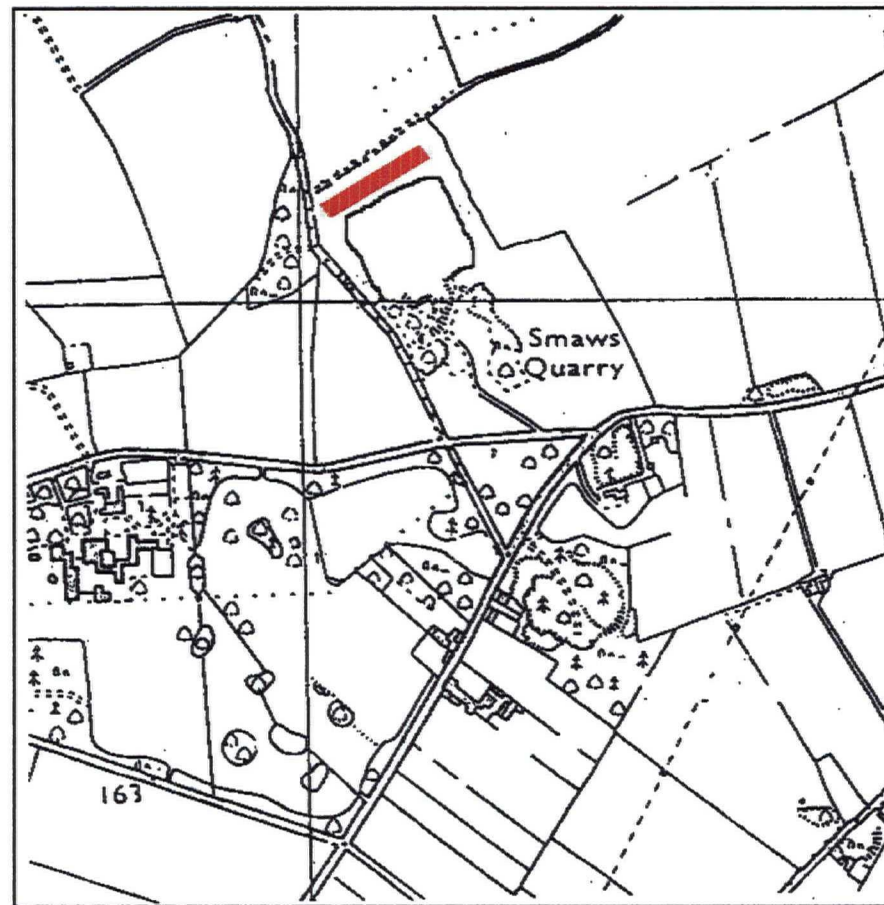


Figure 2 - Scale 1:12500

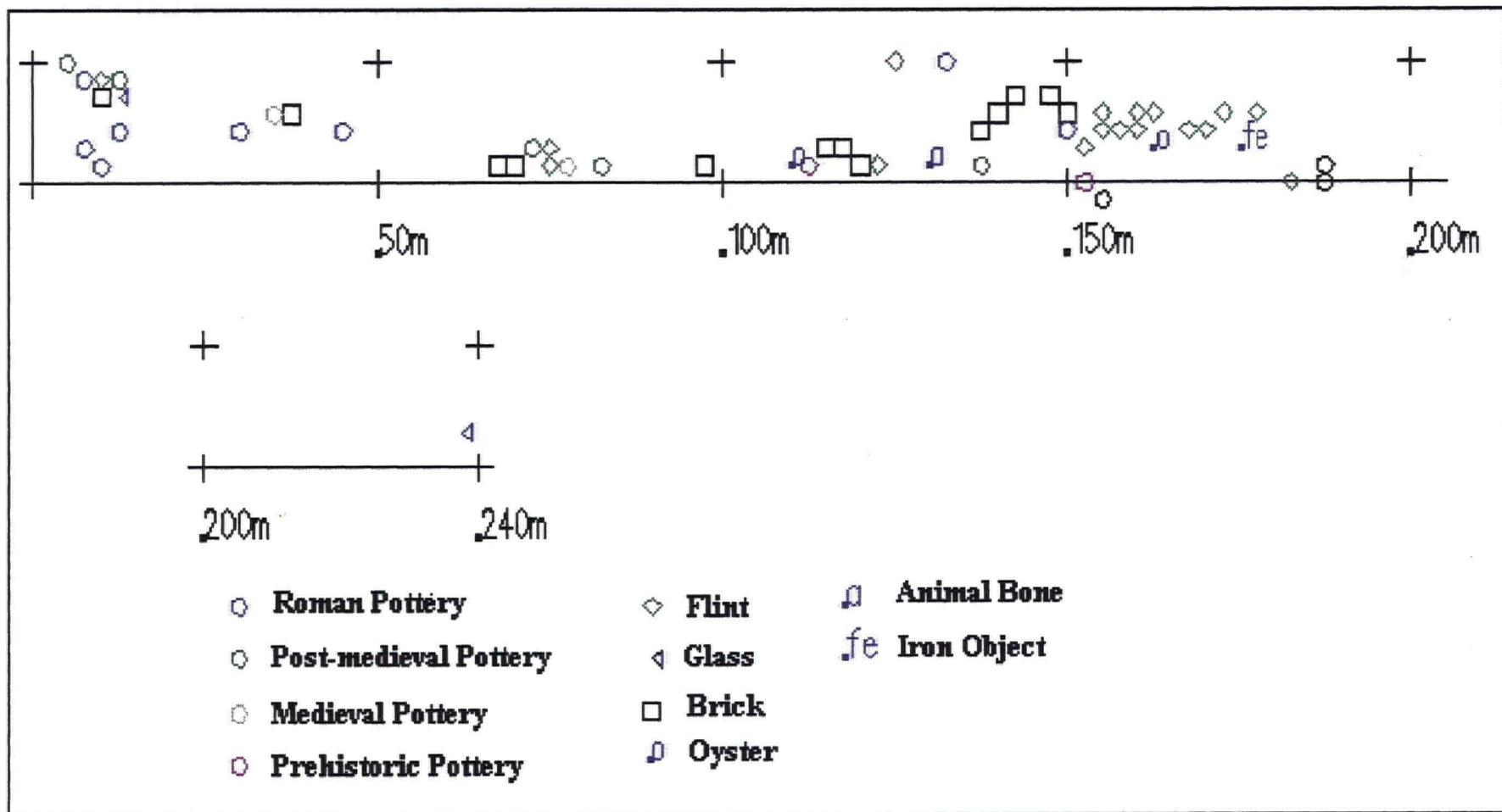


Figure 3.
Distribution of finds for the 1994 season.

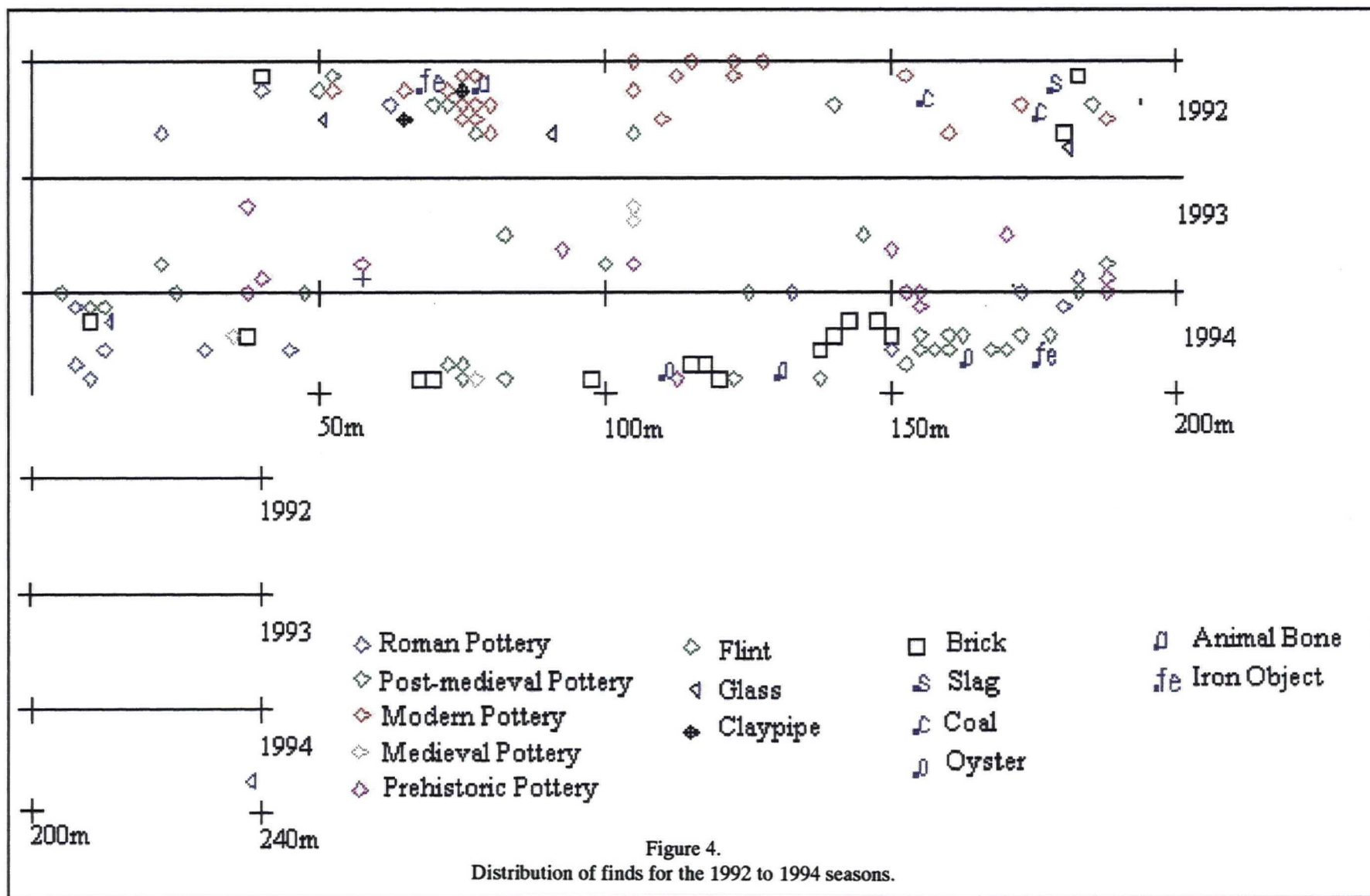


Figure 4.
Distribution of finds for the 1992 to 1994 seasons.

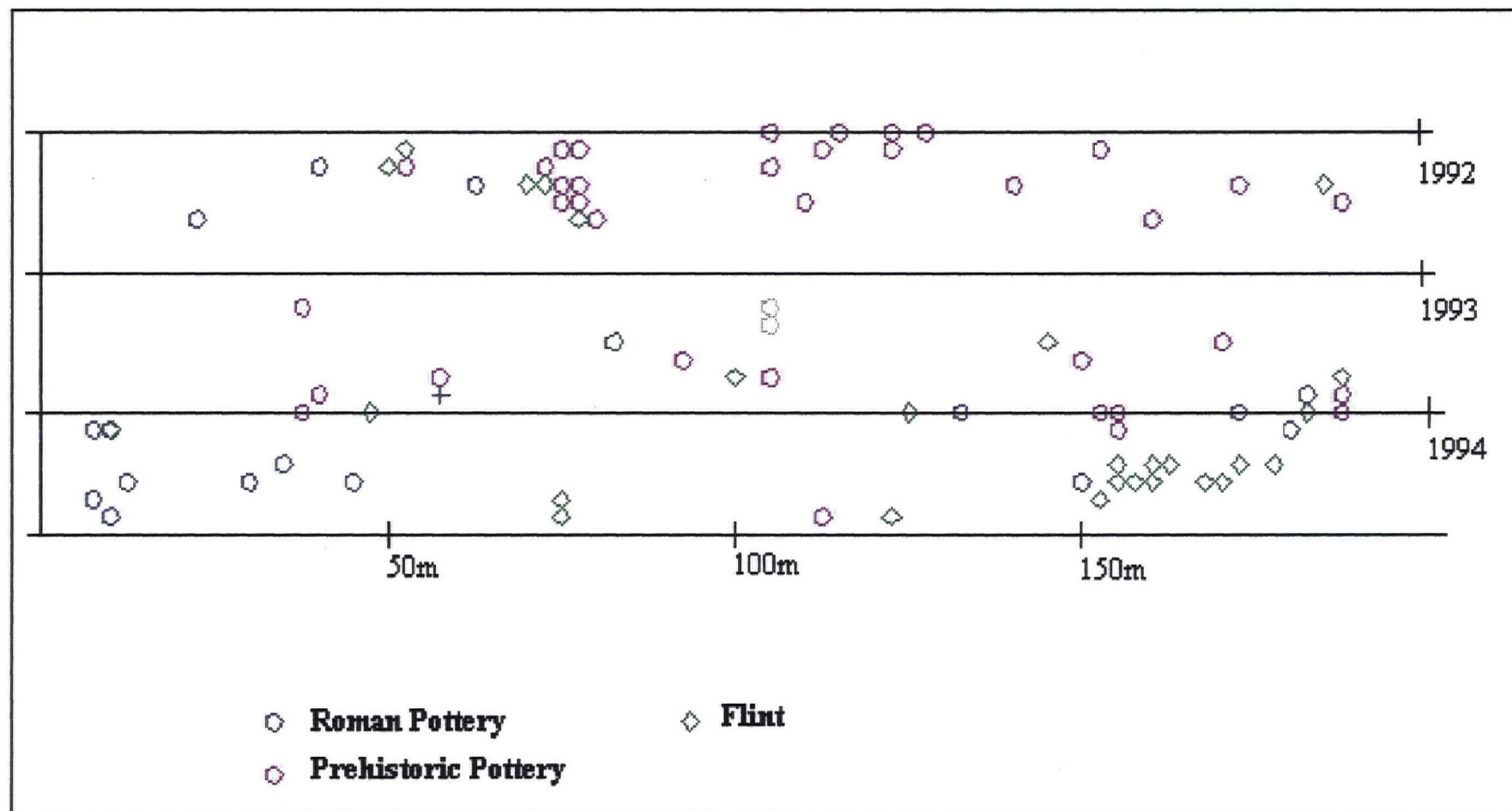


Figure 5.
 Distribution of flint and prehistoric pottery for the 1992 to 1994 seasons.

Appendices

APPENDIX 1

Context Listing

| Context | Description |
|---------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | 10 YR 4/6. Silty sandy clay loam. |
| 2 | 7.5YR 4/3. Sandy clay loam. |

APPENDIX 2

Finds Catalogue

1992 Season Layer 2

| | | |
|-----------|----------|---|
| E 58.10m | N 6.54m | Daub |
| E 155.61m | N -0.32m | Pot - prehistoric - calcite gritted |
| E 104.80m | N 6.80m | Pot - prehistoric - calcite gritted |
| E 170.07m | N 11.00m | Pot - prehistoric - calcite gritted |
| E 187.65m | N 0.33m | Pot - prehistoric - calcite gritted |
| E 151.48m | N 6.90m | Pot - prehistoric - calcite gritted |
| E 155.35m | N 0.43m | Pot - prehistoric - calcite gritted |
| E 38.85m | N 14.35m | Pot - prehistoric - calcite gritted |
| E 93.24m | N 7.10m | Pot - prehistoric - calcite gritted |
| E 38.80m | N 3.45m | Pot - prehistoric - calcite gritted |
| E 154.53m | N -0.15m | Pot - prehistoric - calcite gritted |
| E 85.55m | N 2.23m | Pot - prehistoric - calcite gritted |
| E 39.70m | N 1.46m | Pot - prehistoric - calcite gritted |
| E 189.40 | N 3.90m | Pot - prehistoric - calcite gritted |
| E 57.10m | N 5.40m | Pot - prehistoric - calcite gritted |
| E 94.20m | N 5.05m | Pot - prehistoric - calcite gritted |
| E 57.26m | N 4.09m | Pot - prehistoric - calcite gritted |
| E 9.50m | N -1.25m | Pot - ?Roman |
| E 179.18m | N -1.48m | Pot - Roman - grey ware |
| E 173.64m | N -0.80m | Pot - Roman - grey ware |
| E 183.68 | N 3.42m | Pot - Roman - black burnished cooking pot rim |
| E 104.15m | N 13.25m | Pot - Medieval - abraded Humber ware rim |
| E 10510m | N 14.95m | Pot - Medieval - abraded Humber ware base |
| E 82.96m | N 10.88m | Pot - Post medieval |
| E 42.10m | N -1.10m | Pot - post medieval |
| E 26.10m | N -0.30m | Pot - post medieval |
| E 99.95m | N 00.14m | Pot - post medieval |
| E 22.04m | N 4.16m | Pot - post medieval |
| E 54.20m | N 3.94m | Clay pipe stem |
| E 48.70m | N 0.12m | Flint flake - unworked |
| E 144.75m | N 10.66m | Flint side scraper |
| E 183.25m | N 0.42m | Flint bladelet fragment |
| E 188.75m | N 4.14m | Flint flake - unworked |
| E 98.75m | N 5.98m | Flint blade |

1993 Season

| | | |
|-----------|----------|--|
| E 21.9m | N 7.00m | 1 body sherd, Samian, roman |
| E 40.6m | N 14.3m | 1 base sherd, colour coated ware, roman |
| E 63.5m | N 11.6m | 1 body sherd, samian, roman |
| E 141.70m | N 12.6m | 1 body sherd, white glaze, post-medieval |
| E 152.37m | N 17.20m | 1 body sherd, white glaze, post-medieval |
| E 91.5m | N 12.4m | 1 body sherd, coarseware, post-medieval |
| E 105.6m | N 8.3m | 1 body sherd, coarseware, post-medieval |
| E 51.3m | N 16.3m | 1 body sherd, Creamware, modern |
| E 63.4m | N 13.5m | 1 body sherd, white glaze, modern |

| | | |
|--------------------|----------|--|
| E 67.8m | N 3.9m | 1 body sherd, white glaze, modern |
| E 70.9m | N 18.0m | 1 body sherd, blue/white transfer ware |
| E 76.0m | N 17.9m | 1 body sherd, blue/white transfer ware, modern |
| E 75.3m | N 12.4m | 1 body sherd, white glaze, modern |
| E 76.6m | N 12.8m | 1 body sherd, white glaze, modern |
| E 76.9m | N 12.8m | 1 rim sherd, white glaze, modern |
| E 74.0m | N 13.2m | 1 body sherd, cream glaze, modern |
| E 78.0m | N 12.3m | 1 base sherd, white transfer ware, modern |
| E 79.2m | N 11.9m | 1 body sherd, white glaze, modern |
| E 78.4m | N 7.8m | 1 base sherd, blue/white transfer ware, modern |
| E 89.7m | N 14.7m | 1 body sherd, white glaze, modern |
| E 105.4m | N 19.3m | 1 body sherd, white glaze, modern |
| E 104.9m | N 15.4m | 1 body sherd, blue/white transfer ware, modern |
| E 110.84m | N 11.42m | 1 body sherd, white glaze, modern |
| E 113.2m | N 18.94m | 1 body sherd, blue glaze, modern |
| E 114.5m | N 19.25m | 1 body sherd, yellow glaze, modern |
| E 121.05m | N 18.05m | 1 body sherd, white glaze, modern |
| E 121.85m | N 16.70m | 1 body sherd, blue glaze, modern |
| E 127.22m | N 18.88m | 1 body sherd, blue glaze, modern |
| E 160.96m | N 8.15m | 1 body sherd, blue/white transfer ware, modern |
| E 172.29m | N 13.8m | 1 body sherd, yellow glaze, modern |
| E 187.1m | N 10.78m | 1 body sherd, blue/white transfer ware, modern |
| | | |
| E 49.9m | N10.1m | 1 green glass bottle fragment |
| E 79.0m | N 7.7m | 1 green glass bottle fragment |
| E 181.6m | N 5.02m | 1 beer bottle glass fragment |
| | | |
| E 79.2m | N 11.9m | 1 animal bone |
| | | |
| E 71.4m | N 12.4m | 1 fe object? |
| | | |
| E 65.7m | N 9.1m | 1 clay pipe stem fragment |
| E 75.4m | N 13.7m | 1 clay pipe stem fragment |
| | | |
| E 182.72m | N 17.98m | brick |
| E 180.68m | N 7.20m | brick |
| E 37.7m | N 18.1m | 1 tile fragment |
| | | |
| E 40.9m | N 12.4m | burnt sandstone |
| E 152.47m | N 16.40m | charcoal scatter |
| E 174.35m | N 10.81m | coal |
| E 179.32m | N 14.9m | slag |
| | | |
| E 51.6m | N 16.2m | flint bladelet - light mottled grey |
| E 53.3m | N 17.3m | flint flake - light mottled grey |
| E 70.9m | N 17.3m | flint blade - snapped, mottled grey |
| E 75.4m | N 14.7m | flint flake - translucent |
| E 185.65m | N 13.78m | flint blade - mottled grey |
| | | |
| 1994 Season | | |
| E 11.8m | N 24.5m | pottery - calcite gritted ware |
| E 9.20m | N 5.20m | pottery - abraded Samian |
| E 149.0m | N 14.0m | pottery - abraded Samian |
| E 15.0m | N 14.8m | pottery - Samian |
| E 41.8m | N 12.2m | pottery - grey ware |
| E 38.2m | N 12.5m | pottery - grey ware |
| E 11.9m | N 24.8m | pottery - grey ware |

| | | |
|-----------|---------|----------------------------|
| E 154.0m | N 2.5m | pottery – grey ware |
| E 30.0m | N 12.6m | pottery – medieval |
| E 156.0m | N 26.5m | pottery – medieval |
| E 120.0m | N 23.0m | pottery – medieval |
| E 116.0m | N 22.5m | pottery – medieval |
| E 74.0m | N 21.4m | pottery – medieval |
| E 18.40m | N 5.0m | pottery – post medieval |
| E 13.40m | N 5.40m | pottery – post medieval |
| E 84.0m | N 26.4m | pottery – post medieval |
| E 53.71m | N 22.3m | pottery – post medieval |
| E 238.50m | N 22.5m | glass bottle base |
| E 12.8m | N 11.2m | glass bottle fragment |
| E 10m | N 6.20m | cinder fragment |
| E 114.0m | N 26.5m | oyster shell fragment |
| E 162.0m | N 13.0m | oyster shell fragment |
| E 146.0m | N 25.0m | animal bone fragment |
| E 175.0m | N 12.0m | iron blade fragment |
| E 109.0m | N 26.3m | slag |
| E 34.5m | N 10.6m | tile fragment |
| E 60.0m | N 23.4m | tile fragment |
| E 147.0m | N 13.0m | brick/tile fragment |
| E 145.0m | N 12.0m | brick/tile fragment |
| E 137.0m | N 11.5m | brick/tile fragment |
| E 140.0m | N 13.0m | brick/tile fragment |
| E 137.5m | N 15.0m | brick/tile fragment |
| E 64.0m | N 22.9m | brick/tile fragment |
| E 97.0m | N 24.5m | tile fragment |
| E 123.0m | N 26.3m | brick/tile fragment |
| E 18.80m | N 5m | brick fragment |
| E 12.5m | N 10.1m | tile fragment |
| E 172.5m | N 11.5m | flint end and side scraper |
| E 170.0m | N 12.5m | flint flake |
| E 168.0m | N 15.0m | flint blade |
| E 160.0m | N 14.0m | flint flake |
| E 163.5m | N 12.5m | flint flake |
| E 66.0m | N 24.2m | flint flake |
| E 67.0m | N 23.2m | flint side scraper |
| E 127.0m | N 26.5m | flint flake – retouched |
| E 34.0m | N 11.5m | flint flake |
| E 160.0m | N 12.5m | flint flake |
| E 158.0m | N 13.0m | flint flake |
| E 156.0m | N 12.2m | flint flake |
| E 154.0m | N 11.5m | flint flake |
| E 178.0m | N 10.5m | flint flake |
| E 10.50m | N 6.30m | flint – unworked |
| E 151.0m | N 16.0m | chert |