

*BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY
FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT*

**LITTLE PAXTON QUARRY,
DIDDINGTON,
CAMBRIDGESHIRE
FIELD 5 FIELDWALKING 1998**

B.U.F.A.U.



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**Little Paxton Quarry, Diddington,
Cambridgeshire
Field 5 Fieldwalking 1998**

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Contents

- 1.0 Summary
- 2.0 Introduction
- 3.0 Methodology
- 4.0 Results
- 5.0 Discussion
- 6.0 Acknowledgements
- 7.0 References

Figures

- 1 Location of Little Paxton and the site
- 2 Little Paxton quarry: Phase 3 area and Field 5 (cropmarks by Air Photo Services Ltd.)
- 3 Fieldwalking grid
- 4 All flint finds
- 5 All flint tools
- 6 Flakes and chunks
- 7 Scrapers
- 8 Cores

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Field 5 Fieldwalking 1998

1.0: SUMMARY

This report describes the results of fieldwalking of an area (Field 5) of approximately 11 ha. at Little Paxton Quarry, Diddington, Cambridgeshire. The fieldwalking collection comprised flint only. A total of 154 flakes, 29 struck pieces, 27 cores, 11 scrapers and 39 other retouched pieces were collected. Their distribution suggests a concentration of activity in the western zone of the field. This may indicate that the possibly wetter zone adjoining a stream running along the eastern margin of the field was less intensively settled or occupied.

2.0: INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of the fieldwalking of an area of approximately 11 ha., comprising Field 5 of the Phase 3 area (centred on NGR. TL202659: Figs. 1 and 2) at Little Paxton Quarry, Diddington, Cambridgeshire, Undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit on behalf of Bardon Aggregates Limited. The methodology adopted follows a Specification prepared by BUFAU (BUFAU 1998).

The aims of the fieldwalking were to attempt to define the extent of settlement and activity within the field, based on relative artifact density on the ploughsoil surface, and to date this activity from analysis of the artifact assemblages. Of particular interest was the identification of evidence for Bronze Age and earlier activity. The information contributed by fieldwalking was intended to assist in the formulation of a strategy for subsequent evaluation.

This fieldwork forms part of a large-scale archaeological project, begun in 1992, which aims to provide a landscape-based analysis of changes in settlement forms and agriculture within the quarry concession, and to relate these changes to the evolving river valley environment. The fieldwalking formed the second stage in the evaluation of the Phase 3 area; the first stage comprised the re-plotting of the air photograph evidence (Air Photo Services 1998).

No previous fieldwork had been undertaken in the Field 5 area. Perhaps the most potentially interesting cropmarked feature in the field is an incomplete circular ditched feature, measuring approximately 20m in diameter. Also recorded are ?field boundaries and possible enclosures, concentrated in the east and north of the field.

3.0: METHODOLOGY

Following ploughing and weathering of the field surface, the area was walked, with collection of all artifacts. Following inspection of the field surface, because of the paucity of the artifacts observed, it was decided to collect the artifacts in 50m square

grids (Fig. 3), based on the National Grid. Artifacts were collected by a team of fieldwalkers walking at approximately 5m intervals. The southeastern angle of the field contains a concrete hardstanding.

4.0: RESULTS (Figs, 4-8)

All the items collected comprised flint. A total of 260 items of humanly-struck flint was recovered, weighing approximately 3,543 g. The collection consisted of 154 flakes, 29 struck pieces, 27 cores, 11 scrapers, and 39 other retouched pieces including three pressure-flaked arrowhead preforms.

The flint used is generally translucent, light to dark-grey in colour, with the thin, compacted cortex characteristic of pebble flint from secondary deposits, possibly local river gravels, although natural flint pebbles are also present in the soil. Only one item might have originated from a primary, mined source, a large dark grey core from Grid Square A2, which has been worked from several different directions but still retains a quantity of white cortex with a 'chalky' texture. The core is of a good quality, clear flint but it does not differ substantially from the rest of the collection which is generally of a high quality. Core preparation was minimal and cores tended to be rough and multi-platformed, worked from different directions, presumably for the production of broad flakes, suggesting a Bronze Age date for the majority of the collection. This general date is supported by the high incidence of miscellaneous retouched pieces made from barely modified flakes and chunks, and, occasionally, re-used cores, all of which had single retouched edges and often exhibited traces of utilisation. In comparison, only fourteen formal tools, three arrowhead preforms and eleven scrapers, were present in the collection.

There are no real indications of resource stress in the collection although some tools, for example a large core with signs of use as a hammerstone, have evidently been re-used. Despite the inherent difficulties involved in differentiating between worked flint and the large quantities of natural flint present in the ploughsoil, there is some evidence for clustering within the survey area, attesting to flintworking being carried out, particularly within the western zone, in accordance with the distribution of flakes, chunks and several of the cores. Five of the scrapers were also found in this area. and, since scrapers are one of a limited range of tools to be found in settlement areas with any degree of frequency (Schofield 1987, 280), this suggests that this area was a focus of domestic activity. Arrowheads are usually associated with off-site activities but the three arrowhead preforms recovered had been pressure-flaked on both sides but abandoned prior to completion. All appear to have been intended as barbed and tanged forms and would, therefore, date to the Beaker/Early Bronze Age period.

No pottery, or other finds, were recovered.

5.0: DISCUSSION

The collection suggests a low density, episodic, usage of the landscape with some evidence for tool manufacture. While separate chronological phases of tool manufacture and use cannot be identified in fieldwalking collections, the evidence (an

absence of diagnostically earlier material, unskilled knapping resulting in multi-platformed flake cores and large struck chunks, a lack of blades and formal tool types, and a high incidence of miscellaneous retouched pieces), suggests a generally later prehistoric date for the collection, in accordance with the results of previous work to the southeast of Field 5 (Bevan 1997, Bevan and Dingwall 1997). Closer chronological definition beyond the Beaker period/Early-to-Late Bronze Age is not possible. The low correlation between recognisable cores and other fragments of manufacturing waste might indicate later Bronze Age activity when flint pebbles were often smashed into a series of chunks without leaving a central 'core', as observed in the later Bronze Age assemblage from the riverside zone at Runnymede Bridge, Surrey (Bevan 1996).

A flint assemblage of roughly similar size was collected from Field 1 (Bevan 1996a); less material derived from Field 2 (Bevan and Dingwall 1997). Both these fields measured approximately 4 ha. in extent. This comparison, although admittedly rather crude, could indicate a lesser intensity of activity in Field 5, although this hypothesis remains to be tested by subsequent evaluation.

Similar flint assemblages have been collected from Fields 1 and 2 at Little Paxton Quarry (Bevan 1996a; Bevan and Dingwall 1997). However, subsequent excavation suggests that no associated features had survived plough disturbance (with the possible exception of feature F561, Area D, see Jones forthcoming fig. 1C for location). This may also possibly be the case for Field 5.

A stream channel runs along the eastern edge of Field 5. Air photograph analysis suggests that the eastern zone of the field contains deeper soil, possibly alluvium, as recorded along the western margin of Field 2 to the southeast during excavations in 1997. The apparent 'clustering' of the flint in the western part of the field could result from the avoidance of the wetter areas adjoining the stream, or, alternatively, it could be caused by limited recovery of flint artifacts in the east of the field, as a result of this possible alluvial horizon.

As before, no non-flint finds were collected. The absence of pottery could indicate that pottery of Iron Age, or earlier date, is quickly broken up in the ploughsoil.

6.0: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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7.0: REFERENCES

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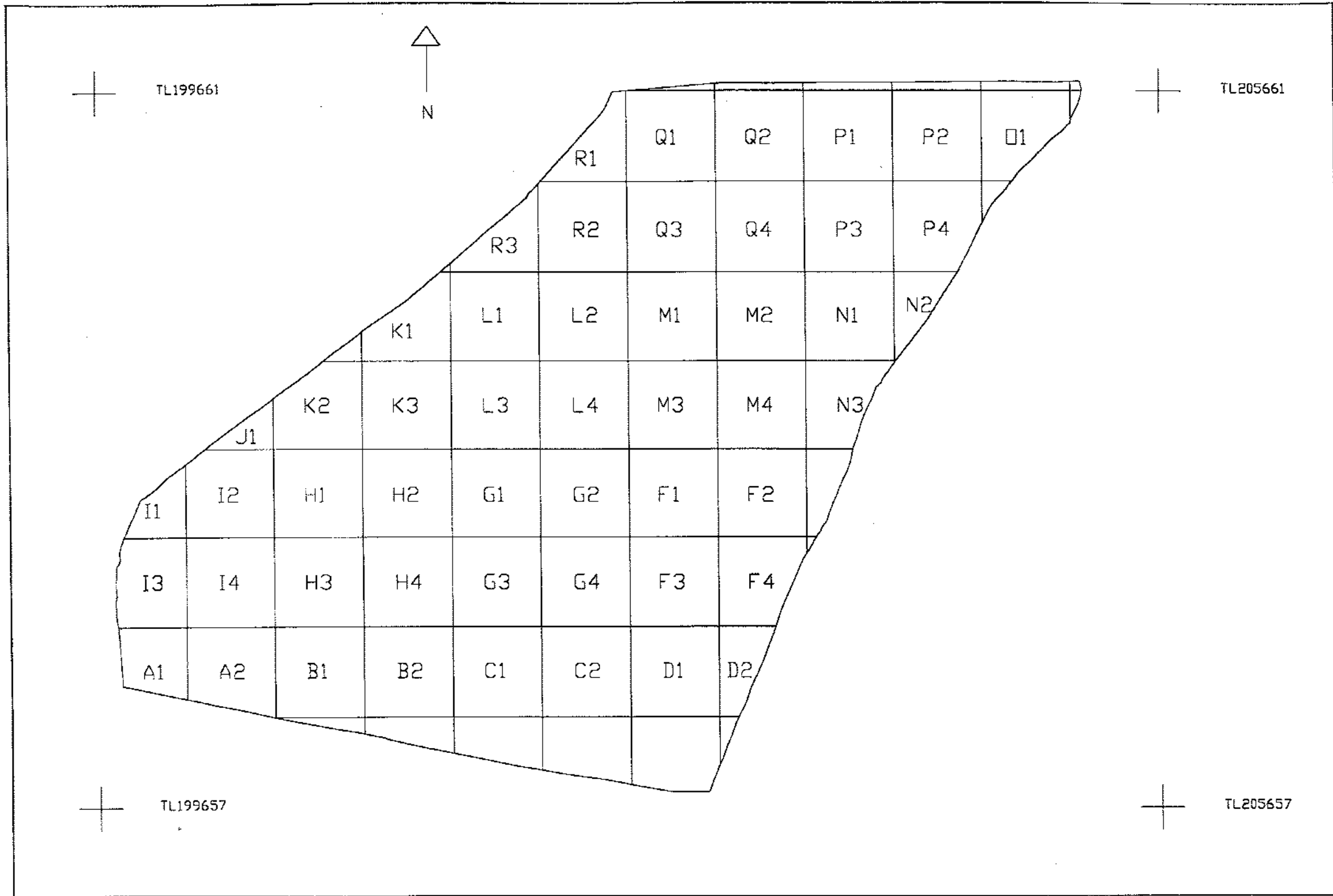


FIG.3

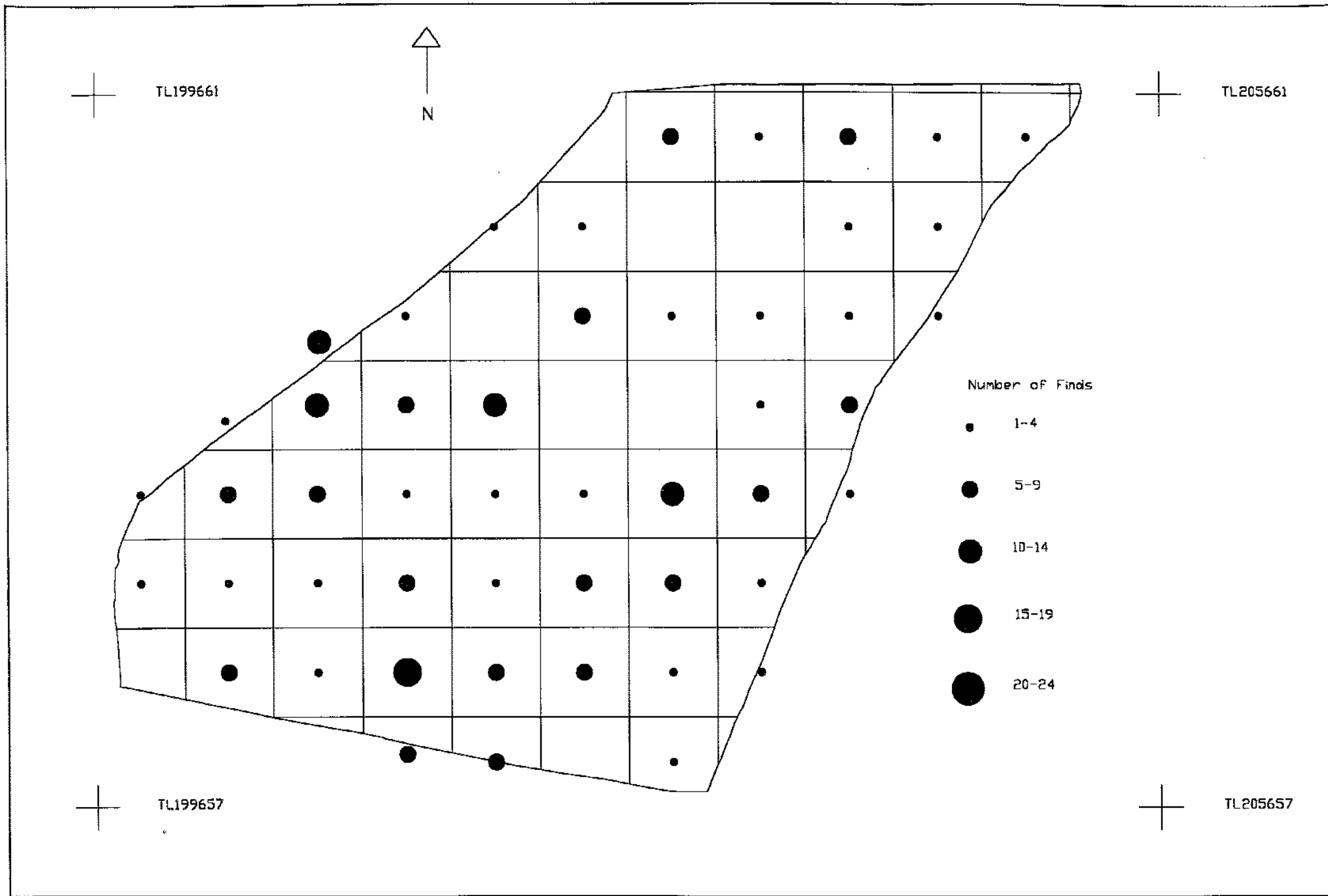


FIG.4

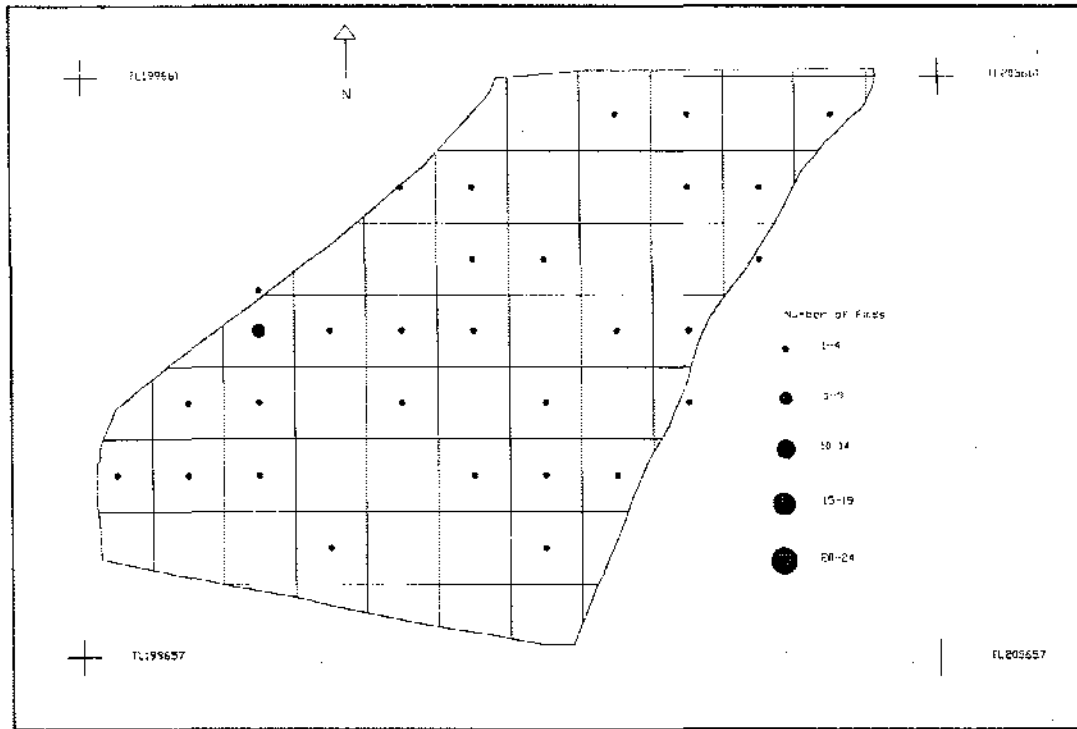


FIG. 5

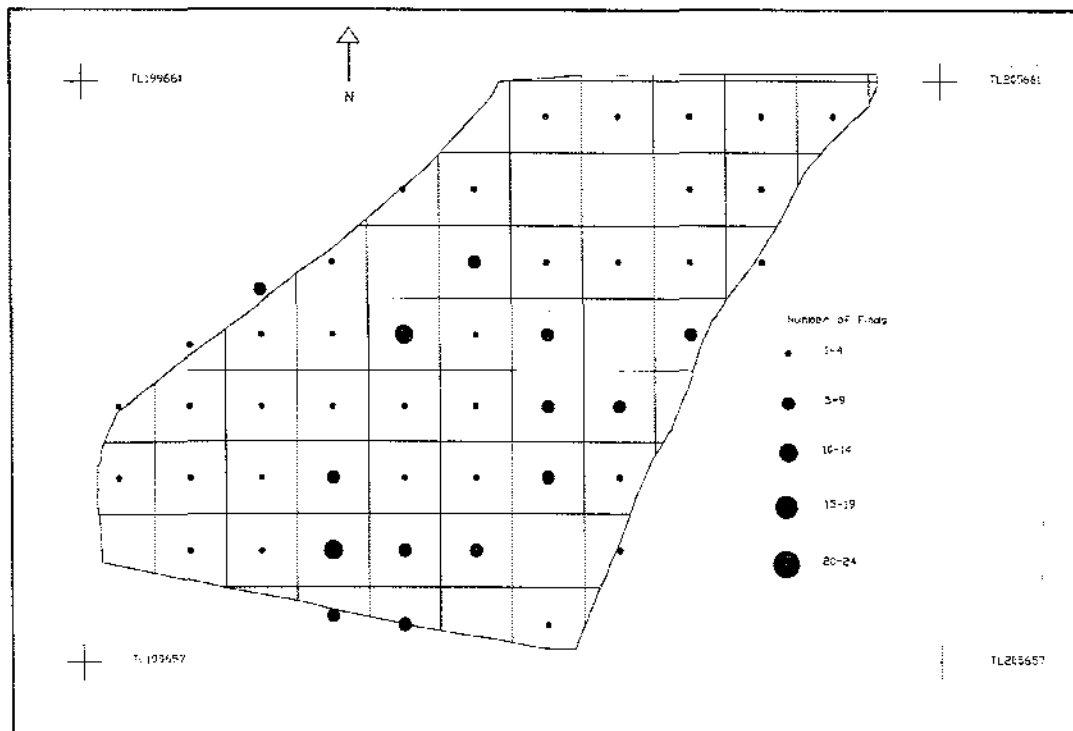


FIG. 6

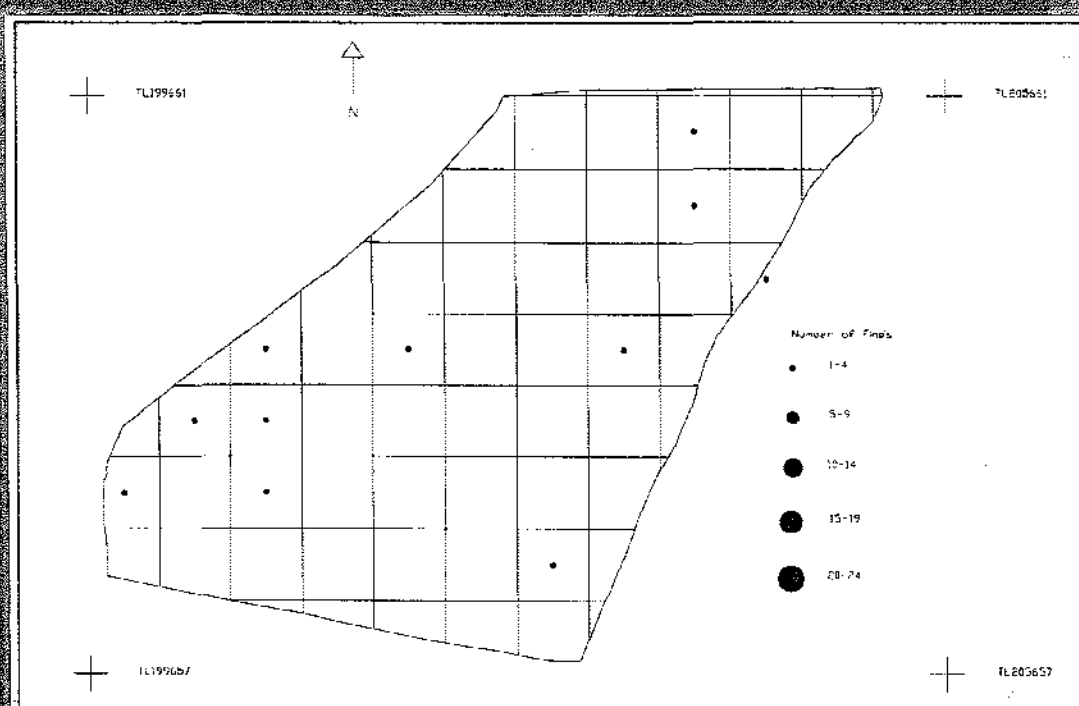


FIG. 7

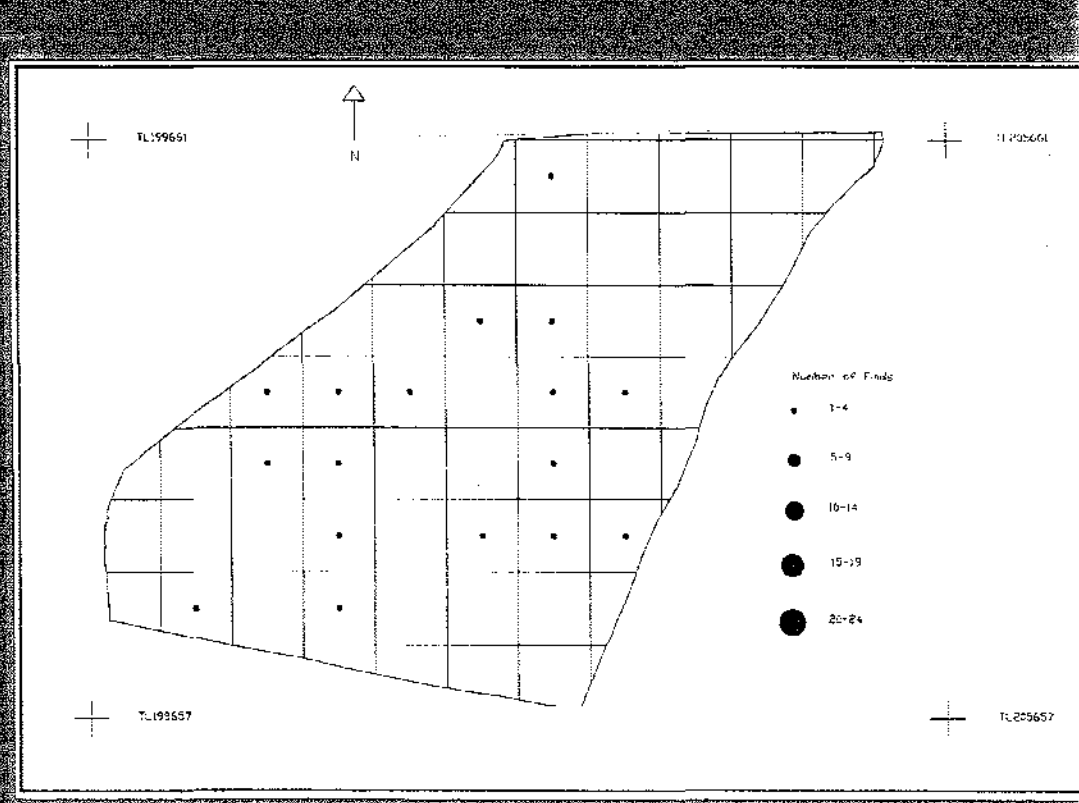


FIG. 8