

*BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY
FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT*

**Shobnall,
Staffordshire 1999
Surface Collection**

B.U.F.A.U.



Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
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by
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Summary

Systematic surface collection of artefacts was undertaken on a site of approximately 20 hectares at Shobnall, Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire (centred on SK 2275 2272) in advance of development proposals. The fieldwork followed a desk-based assessment which identified significant archaeological monuments, primarily of the Roman, medieval and post-medieval periods, in the vicinity of the site but not on the site itself. A flint knife, of Neolithic or Bronze Age date, was recovered. A dispersed scatter of 7 sherds of medieval pottery is attributed to manuring. A concentration of post-medieval material in the central area and south-west corner of the site is attributed to activity associated with the construction of the Trent and Mersey canal and the manuring of allotments.

Introduction

The following report details the results of archaeological fieldwork at Area 14, Shobnall, Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire (centred on NGR SK 2275 2272). The work, commissioned by Shepherd Gilmour Environment Ltd, consisted of systematic fieldwalking and surface collection of artefacts from the ploughsoil, and was undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology during September 1999.

The surface collection exercise was recommended in a desk-based archaeological assessment undertaken by John Samuels Archaeological Consultants (JSAC 1999). The assessment concluded that although there were no significant archaeological sites known within the development area, the density of sites in the immediate vicinity made further evaluation of Area 14 desirable. This recommendation was accepted by the Staffordshire County Council Archaeological Officer and a brief (Appendix 1) was prepared for systematic fieldwalking. The fieldwork was designed to provide archaeological information to assist the local planning authority in determining a planning application.

Site Location (Fig. 1)

The site, known as Area 14, consists of approximately 20 hectares of fields lying c. 1km west of the centre of Burton-on-Trent. The western side of the development is bounded by the A38 road, with the Trent and Mersey canal defining the limit of the southern and eastern sides of the development. The northern side of the development is bounded by modern housing, a sports ground and a brewery, all of which front onto Shobnall Road.

The topography of the land is flat and the drift geology is river terrace gravels below coarse loamy soils of the Wigton Soil Association. The area is mostly open land with a wooded and overgrown area to the south.

Archaeological Background

This is only a brief summary of the archaeology in the vicinity of the development; a more detailed account is provided in the desk-based assessment (JSAC 1999).

There is little evidence of archaeological activity within the development area itself. The earliest recorded site is a post-medieval brickworks (SMR 5174), located in the south of Area 14. An undated silver brooch (SMR 40007) is attributed to the grid reference NGR SK 226 228, which is within the development site, but the significance of this record is uncertain.

Burton-on-Trent has evidence of prehistoric activity dating from the Neolithic period, and a Roman road, Rykneld Street, lies 500m to the south-east of the site. Roman coins have been recovered in the vicinity of Area 14 and a Romano-British enclosure (SMR 1409) was excavated south of the Trent and Mersey canal. There is no evidence of Anglo-Saxon activity in this area.

A monastic grange was established at Shobnall by 1325 (SMR 1618), to the west of the modern A38, and Sinai Park (SMR 899), south of Shobnall Grange, is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 21535) containing a moated site dating to the medieval period.

The Trent and Mersey canal was completed in 1775 and there was associated post-medieval development in the form of the brickworks mentioned above. Other post-medieval sites lie to the west of the A38 and include a pumping station (SMR 5178) and a quarry (SMR 5182).

Objective

The objective of the surface collection was to provide information to help determine the nature, extent, character and date of any potential archaeological features present on the site.

Methodology

Initially, 100m² grids were laid out using a Sokkia Set 3 Total Station, and surveyed into the national grid. These were then divided into 20m intervals. Surface collection was carried out along 20m transects and 20m stints. Modern artefacts, including brick and tile, were not collected, but their presence was noted. All other finds categories were collected.

The site had been ploughed prior to the field walking and had been allowed to weather for over 2 weeks. Conditions under foot were difficult in areas and, in places, the topsoil had a high clay content. However, visibility was adequate. The weather conditions were relatively favourable, alternating between showers and dry periods.

Results

The finds were quantified by occurrence only (Table 1) and sorted into the following groups: flint (natural), worked flint, medieval and post-medieval pottery, post-medieval tile and vessel glass, clay pipe and miscellaneous.

Find type	Quantity
Flint (natural)	17
Flint tools (Knife)	1
Medieval pottery	7
Post-medieval pottery	301
Clay pipe	9
Post-medieval tile	48
Post-medieval vessel glass	55
Miscellaneous	8

Table 1: Summary of finds recovered by surface collection

Figures 2 and 3 provide distribution plots of the worked flint and medieval pottery, and post-medieval pottery respectively.

The flint by Lynne Bevan (Fig 2) – A flint knife was recovered of a high-quality translucent dark grey-brown flint. It had been retouched around both sides and the tip showed signs of utilisation. While not chronologically diagnostic, the knife is probably of Neolithic to Bronze Age date and, in the absence of a larger assemblage, this isolated find does not indicate prolonged prehistoric settlement or activity in the area.

The medieval pottery (Fig 2) – A small scatter of seven medieval oxidised sherds was recovered. No concentration or pattern is evident in the plotted data. The scatter is most likely to be associated with the common practice of manuring in the medieval period.

The post-medieval pottery (Fig 3) – A total of 301 sherds of post-medieval pottery was recovered from surface collection. The range of pottery includes manganese mottled wares, blackwares, slipware, modern glazed wares, stoneware and tin-glazed earthen wares. There appears to be a limited concentration of material in the central area and south-west corner of the site, in particular the area bounded by the Trent and Mersey canal and garden allotments. The most probable explanation for the volume of pottery recovered is debris from the construction of the canal and manuring of the allotment plots.

Other finds – A small quantity of other post-medieval finds, including clay pipe, tile fragments and post-medieval glass vessel fragments, was recovered. These finds have not been plotted as their presence was deemed not to add any further significance to Fig 3.

The finds and archive are currently stored at Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit, prior to arrangements being made for deposition with the City

Museum and Art Gallery at Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent. The finds archive comprises a single box of finds.

Conclusions

Given the very low numbers of pre-18th-century finds recovered, the study area would appear to have a low archaeological potential. The few medieval sherds that were recovered were probably associated with field manuring and the single flint artefact is presumably a stray find. Following discussions with the Heritage Data Manager at Staffordshire County Council, it is felt no further archaeological work is required.

Acknowledgments

The fieldwork was carried out by Gary Coates, John Hovey and Chris Hewitson, with surveying undertaken by John Hovey and Chris Hewitson. The finds were processed by Erica Macey and identified by Annette Hancocks, with the exception of the worked flint which was identified by Lynne Bevan. The figures were prepared by Nigel Dodds and the report was edited by Simon Buteux. Thanks are due to Graeme Malpass of Shepherd Gilmour Environment Ltd.

Reference

John Samuels Archaeological Consultants 1999 *A Desk-based Archaeological Assessment at Shobnall, Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire.*

Figures

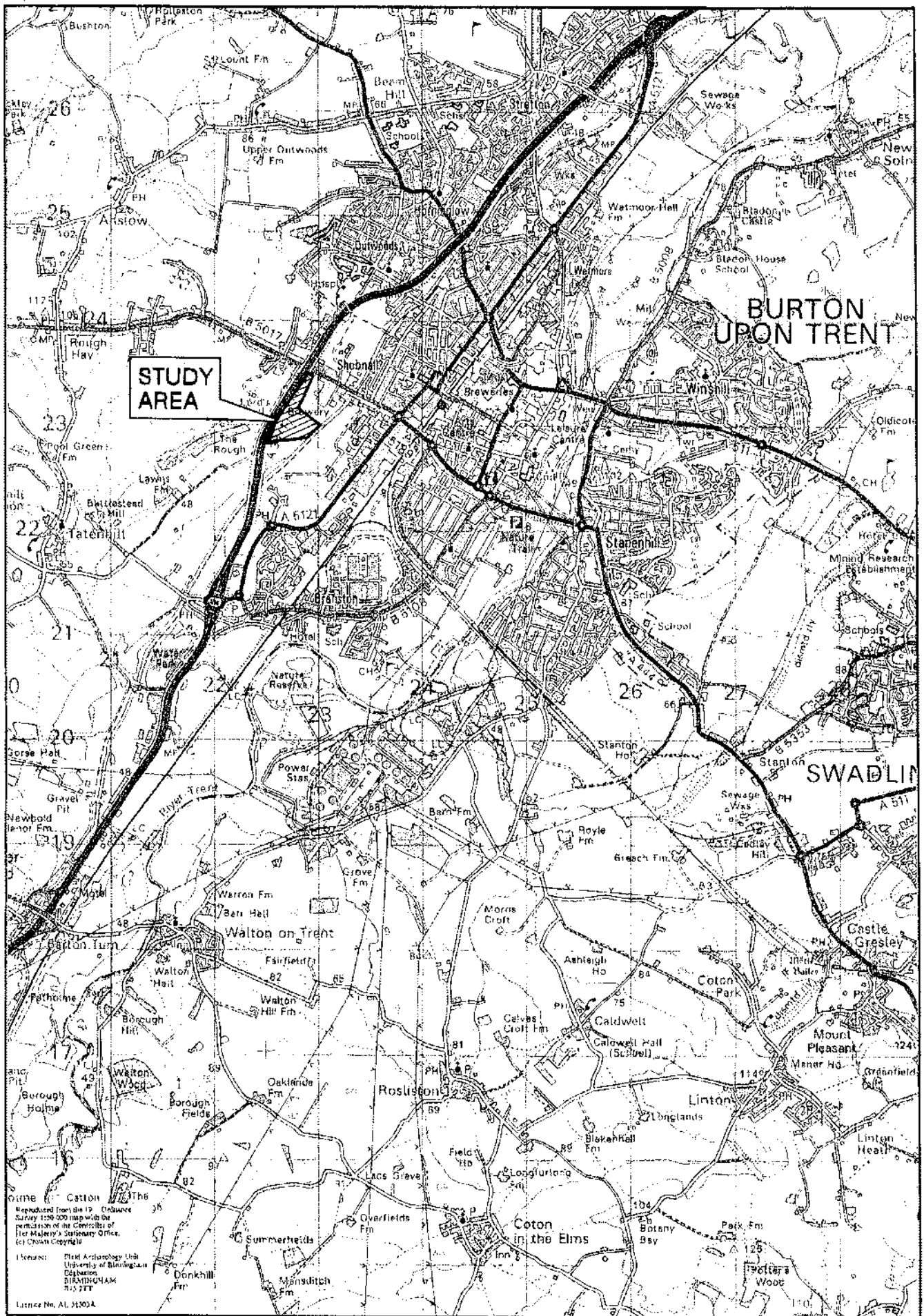


Fig. 1

Distribution Plot of Medieval Pottery & Flint Knife

- ◆ Flint Knife
- Medieval Pot

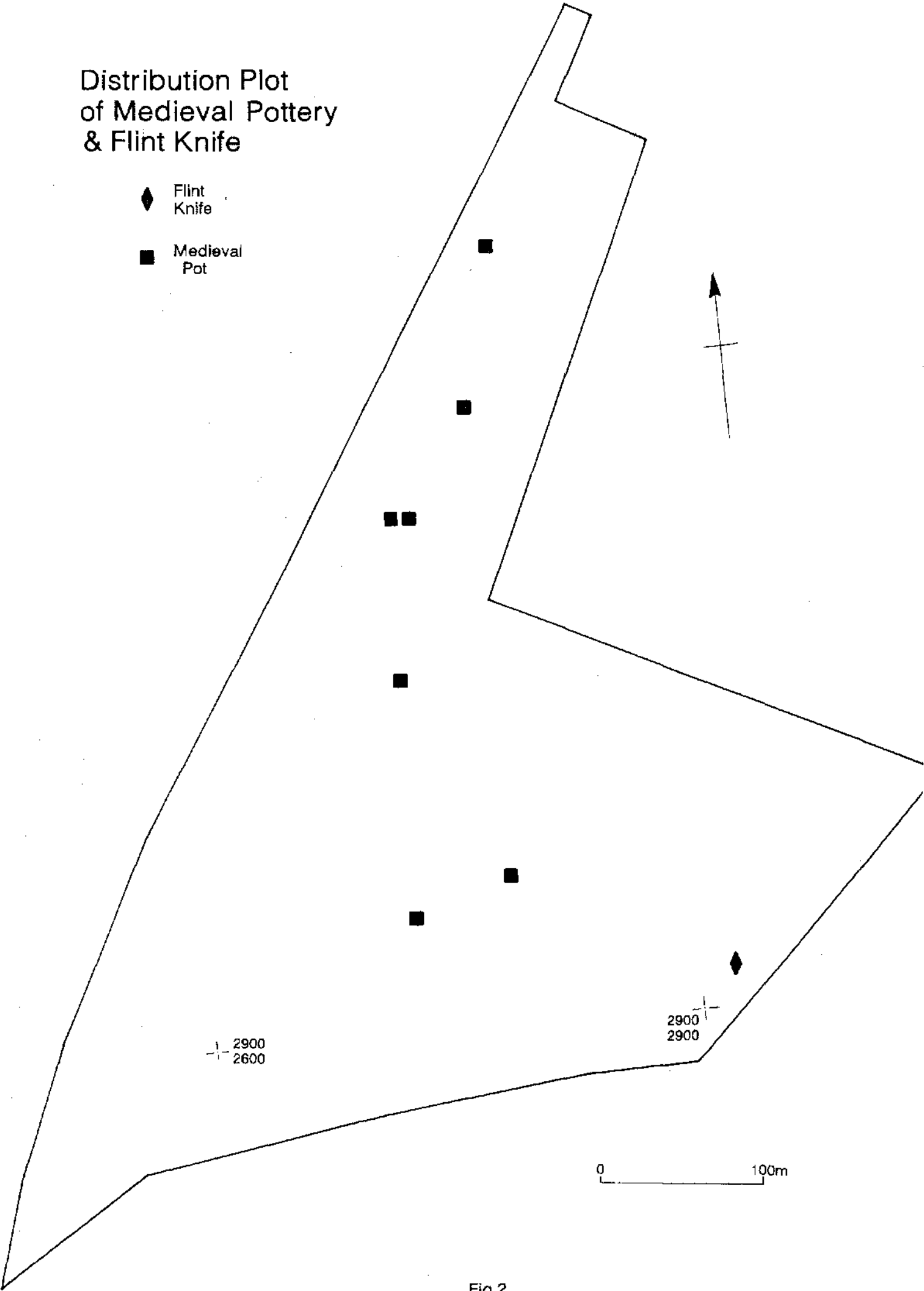


Fig.2

Distribution Plot of Post-Medieval Pottery

- 1-4
- 5-10
- > 10

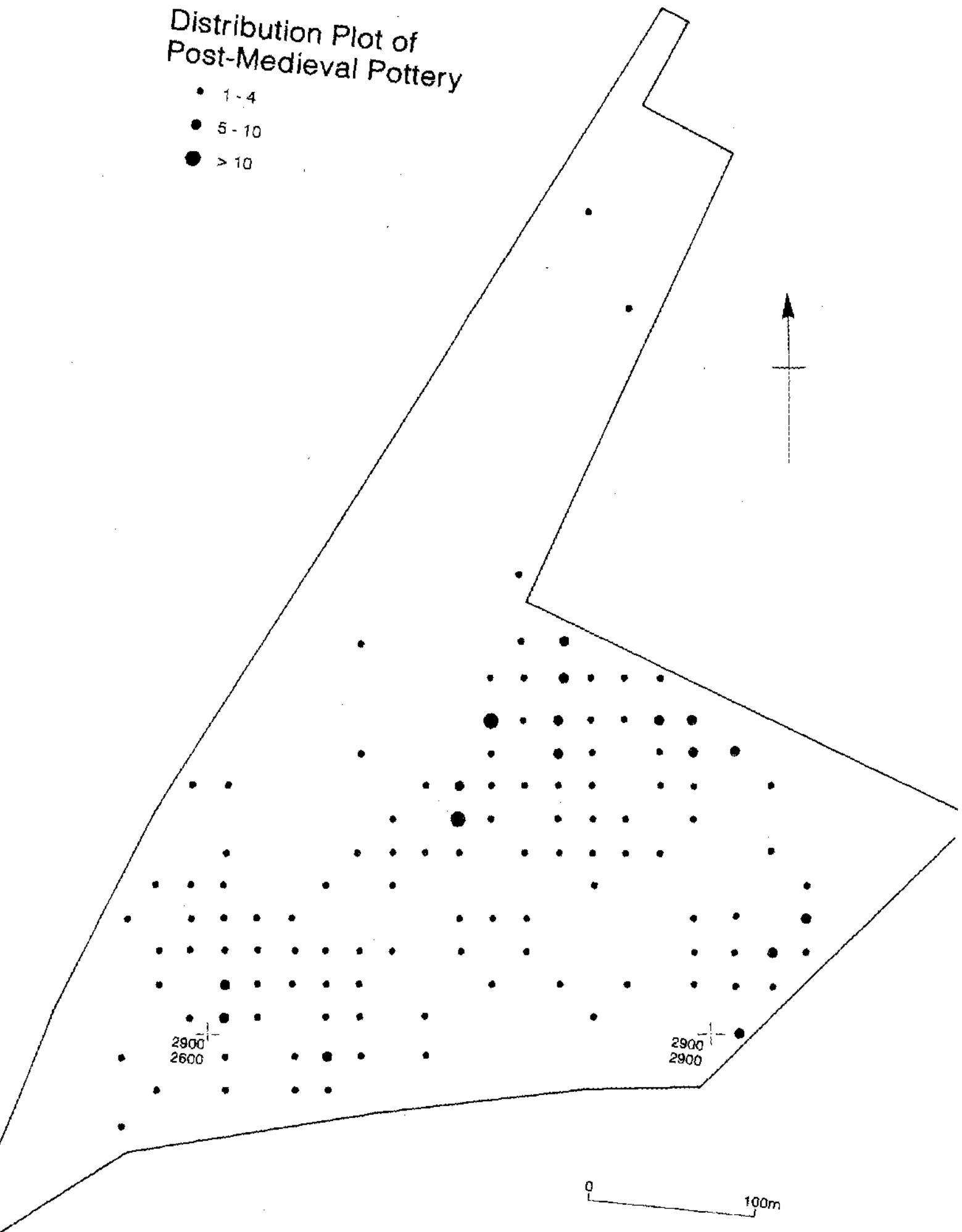


Fig. 3

Appendix 1

**BRIEF AND SPECIFICATION
FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
AT AREA 14 SHOBNALL,
BURTON UPON TRENT**

JUNE 1999



SPECIFICATION FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The objective of this Specification is to establish a framework that is acceptable to the Local Planning Authority (LPA), acting on the advice of the County Archaeological Officer, within which the evaluation may be carried out.
- 1.2 The process of evaluation will be conducted in accordance with a project design to be approved in writing by the LPA, and in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (1994).
- 1.3 Any variation in this Specification will be agreed in advance by the developer and the LPA.

2.0 GENERAL CONDITIONS

Appointment of an archaeological contractor

- 2.1 The developer shall appoint a suitably qualified archaeological field contractor (AFC).
- 2.2 Those matters in this Specification relating to the rights and duties of the AFC shall be substantially reproduced in all contracts for the services of an AFC.

Access

- 2.3 The Developer shall afford access to the evaluation site to the AFC and personnel approved by the AFC at all reasonable times within the period of the evaluation.
- 2.4 The Developer shall afford access to the evaluation site for the purposes of archaeological monitoring to officers of the LPA or personnel nominated by them at all reasonable times upon compliance with the requirements of health and safety.
- 2.5 The Developer shall give the LPA at least ten days' notice in writing of the commencement of the evaluation.
- 2.6 The Developer shall use their reasonable endeavours to restrict access for the purpose of searching for and excavating archaeological objects to the AFC and personnel approved by the AFC.

Safety

- 2.7 The Developer shall use their reasonable endeavours to ensure that the AFC and all other approved personnel shall at all times comply with the requirements of health and safety and shall give the Developer such indemnity as may reasonably be required against responsibility for injury or accident.
- 2.8 The Developer shall require that the AFC and all other approved personnel shall have insurance cover adequate to meet any claims that may arise from their acts or omissions.

3.0 THE EVALUATION

- 3.1 The AFC shall familiarise themselves with all information available and relevant to the evaluation.

Field Walking

- 3.2 The developer shall instruct the AFC to carry out a programme of field walking and supply to the AFC sufficient funds with which to carry out the said programme of works and the analysis of any recovered archaeological material, as defined in 3.3 – 3.7 b.
- 3.3 The field walking shall take place on that part of the development area that is under cultivation, and during the period between the harvesting of the crop and the time when the new crop obscures the surface.
- 3.4 Field walking to take place using lanes 20m wide. Recovered archaeological material to be bagged for every 20m length of each of the lanes and each bag marked according to its position within the field.
- 3.5 All archaeological material to be washed, marked, quantified and identified.

Method of recording

- 3.5 A general site plan will indicate the density of material across the site. This plan will be included in the evaluation report and will be related to Ordnance Survey datum levels and their relation to the National Grid referencing system shall be made clear.

An appropriate finds recording system shall be employed, and finds recording and conservation shall be carried out by an appropriately qualified person.

Deposition of archive and finds

- 3.7 The finds analysis work shall be carried out immediately on completion of site investigations. The site archive shall be prepared in accordance with established professional guidelines.

The written and illustrated report of evaluation shall be copied to:

- i) the local planning authority
- ii) the County Council
- iii) the National Monuments Record
- iv) the developer

The archive and finds, including a copy of the evaluation report, shall be deposited at an appropriate museum, such as the City Museum and Art Gallery at Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent. The museum guidelines regarding the acceptance of such material should be taken into account when preparing tenders and the recipient museum shall be informed in advance of the date when the site evaluation is to commence. The completed evaluation report shall be received not more than eight weeks after the date at which works are completed on site. The written report will become publicly accessible, as part of the Staffordshire Sites and Monuments Record, within six months of completion. The AFC shall also submit a short summary report for inclusion in the next edition of the journal *West Midlands Archaeology*.