

A FIELDWALKING PROJECT AT BREECHLANDS FARM, NEAR HURSTPIERPOINT, WEST SUSSEX

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A fieldwalking survey at Breechlands Farm, near Hurstpierpoint, has produced evidence for activity dating from the Mesolithic to the present day. In addition to the re-discovered 'Breach Land', sites dating to the Mesolithic, Bronze Age and Roman periods were identified.

INTRODUCTION

As part of a larger project, a number of fields were walked between 1985 and 1987 at Breechlands Farm, about 1 km. south of Hurstpierpoint, West Sussex (Fig. 1). The survey covered in detail some of the fields which were looked at briefly in 1985 as part of the A23 improvements route survey (Holgate 1987), and also supplemented the excavations being carried out at the medieval site at Muddleswood (Butler 1986, and forthcoming), immediately to the south of the survey area.

The area surveyed (Fig. 1c), lies on the Greensand belt running between the South Downs and the Wealden clay. It comprises an area of gently rolling open farmland, with a stream on the northern and eastern side, and bordered by the existing A23 London/Brighton road on the west side.

Each of the fields available was walked on a 20 metre transect grid, orientated grid north, with all the archaeological finds along each transect being bagged in 20 metre collection units. Evidence for activity from the Mesolithic through to the present day was found, and is discussed further below.

THE FINDS

Flintwork

There was a scatter of prehistoric flintwork

found across all of the fields covered by the survey (Fig. 3). The type of flint recovered reflects the typical range of flint found elsewhere on the greensand (Butler 1989a), with the finer nodules being selected for use in the production of implements. A wide range of implements and debitage was found, and is summarised in Table 1.

Debitage

The majority of the debitage comprised flakes, although a number of Mesolithic blades and bladelets, some of which were truncated, were also present. Both hard and soft hammer production was evident. Six of the flakes were fire fractured. Some 39 flakes and blades are retouched.

Cores

Ten cores were located, and range from well prepared one and two platform Mesolithic blade/bladelet cores (Fig. 2), to later roughly struck one or two platform flake cores.

Implements

A number of the implements date from the Mesolithic, and include end scrapers and a single microlith (Fig. 2). However the majority of the implements date from the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age; these include scrapers, piercers (Fig.

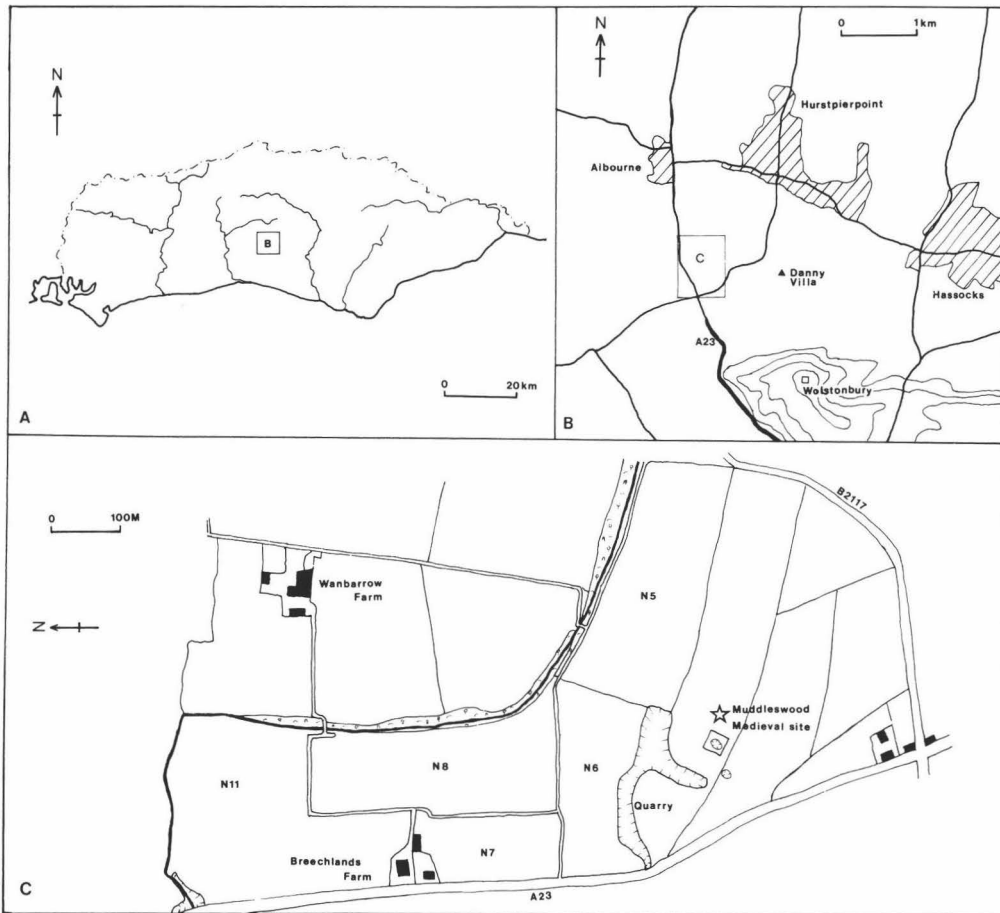


Fig. 1. Breechlands Farm; A: Location, B: Local area, C: Project area.

2), cutting and notched pieces, and a single knife (Table 1).

Fire fractures

458 fire fractured flints weighing 4710 g. were recovered in the survey (Fig. 6).

POTTERY

Introduction

Over one thousand pottery sherds and fragments of clay pipe were recovered during the

survey, ranging in date from the Bronze Age through to the present day. These are summarised in Table 2. The sherds have been divided into fabrics and are discussed further below.

Fabrics

1. Prehistoric

Most of the sherds found can be assigned to the early Bronze Age and Beaker period, with a number being later in date and possibly Iron Age. The fabrics which can be assigned to the

Bronze Age comprise examples from both fine and domestic wares. One body sherd of Fabric C (Fig. 2, No. 7) is decorated with two lines of 'Whipped Cord' impressions.

Fabric A: Grog-tempered with abundant calcinated flint (medium to coarse) inclusions. Sometimes reduced. Grey to red-brown in colour. Early Bronze Age in date.

Fabric B: Grog-tempered with abundant calcinated flint (small to medium) and occasional quartz sand inclusions. No reduction. Red-brown to brown in colour. Probably Bronze Age in date.

Fabric C: Grog-tempered with occasional calcinated flint (medium to coarse) inclusions. 'Smoothed' outer side, occasionally decorated. Dark grey in colour. Early Bronze Age in date.

TABLE 1
Flintwork from Breechlands Farm, by Type

	N5	N6	Field N7	N8	N11	Total
<i>Debitage</i>						
Flakes	93	74	15	68	99	349
Blades/bladelets	8	16	1	7	8	40
Axe thinning flakes	2	2	1	2	—	7
Ground axe flake	—	—	1	—	—	1
Fragments	5	4	5	13	13	40
Shattered piece	2	—	1	—	2	5
Microburin	1	—	—	—	—	1
						443
<i>Cores</i>						
1 Platform blade core	—	—	—	2	1	3
2 Platform blade core	—	1	—	—	1	2
1 Platform flake core	1	1	1	—	—	3
2 Platform flake core	—	1	—	—	—	1
Core tablet	—	—	—	—	1	1
						10
<i>Implements</i>						
Scrapers	15	7	1	2	7	32
Piercers	4	2	—	1	—	7
Combination tool	—	1	—	—	—	1
Cutting flake/blades	4	2	1	2	1	10
Notched flake/blades	7	2	—	—	—	9
Knife	—	—	—	—	1	1
Microolith	1	—	—	—	—	1
						61
						514
Fire fractures	150	83	16	89	120	458
Total						972

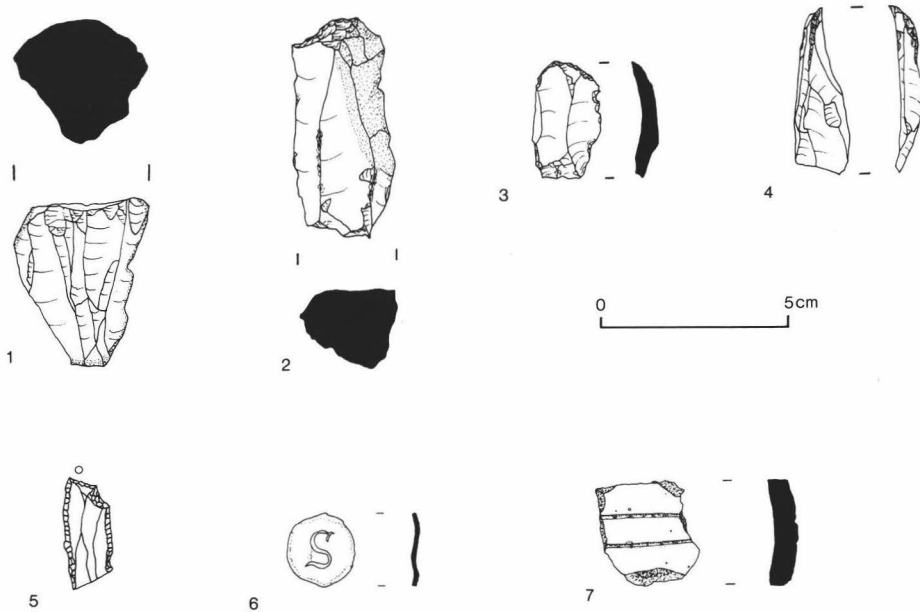


Fig. 2. Breechlands Farm: Flintwork and other Finds: 1, Single platform bladelet core; 2 & 3, Scrapers; 4, Piercer; 5, Microlith; 6, Late Medieval token; 7, Bronze Age pottery sherd.

Fabric D: Flint-gritted ware (medium to coarse size). Some medium sized grog inclusions. Pink, red-brown, grey and black in colour. Bronze Age/Iron Age in date.

Fabric E: Grog-tempered with occasional fine quartz sand inclusions (possibly natural). Slightly burnished. Possibly mid-late Iron Age in date.

2. Roman

The Roman pottery comprises red and grey 'sandy' wares, together with a large number of 'East Sussex Ware sherds'. Having a date span of c. 50 B.C. to 400 A.D., some of the latter may date from the late Iron Age.

Fabric F: Sandy 'grey' wares: Small quartz sand inclusions. Grey in colour with buff cores in some sherds.

Fabric G: Sandy red wares: Small quartz sand inclusions. Red-brown in colour with grey-buff cores. Some sherds have a red slip.

Fabric H: Handmade grog-tempered wares (East Sussex Ware). Various fabric colours, soapy feel.

3. Medieval

The 329 sherds of medieval pottery have been divided into five fabrics dependent upon the size of inclusion (Barton 1979). The inclusions comprise only calcinated flint and quartz sand. Thirty sherds (9 per cent) have signs of a glaze and 20 sherds (6 per cent) are rim sherds. A single stabbed handle was also found. A number of Fabric I sherds appear to be of Saxon-Norman ware.

Fabric I: Coarse flint filler, grains larger than 1 mm.

Fabric J: Medium flint filler, grains no larger than 1 mm.

Fabric K: Fine flint filler/medium quartz sand filler, grains no larger than 0.5 mm.

Fabric L: Fine quartz sand filler, grains no larger than 0.25 mm.

Fabric M: No inclusions visible to the naked eye.

4. Post Medieval

A total of 461 post-medieval sherds were found, and comprise a wide variety of wares and fabrics ranging from the 17th century to the present day.

Fabric N: Various types/wares.

TABLE 2
Pottery from Breechlands Farm, by Fabric

Fabric	Field					Total
	N5	N6	N7	N8	N11	
<i>Prehistoric</i>						
A	—	3	—	—	—	3
B	3	1	—	—	—	4
C	—	2	—	—	—	2
D	—	6	—	1	—	7
E	—	2	—	—	—	2
<i>Roman</i>						
F	1	11	—	—	1	13
G	2	6	—	1	—	9
H	3	23	—	1	5	32
<i>Medieval</i>						
I	24	15	4	20	6	69
J	31	17	3	17	9	77
K	33	19	5	23	13	93
L	16	16	3	14	11	60
M	8	3	4	7	8	30
<i>Post-Medieval</i>						
N	117	103	40	80	124	461
Clay pipe	6	28	52	39	42	167
Total						1029

5. Clay pipe

Clay pipe fragments were recovered from all fields in the survey. These ranged from older thicker stemmed types to the more recent thin stemmed varieties (Atkinson). A number were decorated, or displayed makers initials; these are listed in the appendix.

Building Material

There was a general scatter of building

material such as brick, tile and slate across all of the fields. Most of this appears to be post-medieval in date, however a number of tile fragments may be medieval. The building material was concentrated near the current buildings of Breechlands Farm, and in the north-east corner of field N11.

Glass

Some 50 fragments of glass were recovered, most of which appeared to be post-medieval, although a few items may be earlier. The majority of the glass fragments were from bottles or vessels.

Animal Bone

Thirty-seven fragments of bone and tooth, together with 30 fragments of oyster shell were collected in the survey. This material was found in all of the fields covered by the survey, although the majority came from the southern most fields.

Iron Objects

Twenty-two iron objects were found, most of which were either nails or unidentified fragments, and could be of any date.

Non-Ferrous Metal Objects

Lead Token: Late medieval. Uniface type: large stylised 'S'. Diameter 18 mm. Field N6 (Fig. 2, No. 6).

Buttons: Two post medieval buttons were found.

DISCUSSION

Activity in this area appears to have started in the Mesolithic, when hunter gatherers began to exploit the Greensand belt. Substantial evidence has already been accumulated for Mesolithic activity on the Greensand ridge to the north of the area covered by the survey (Butler 1989b). However, this survey has produced evidence for widespread activity in the Mesolithic between the Greensand ridge and the escarpment slope of the South Downs. This

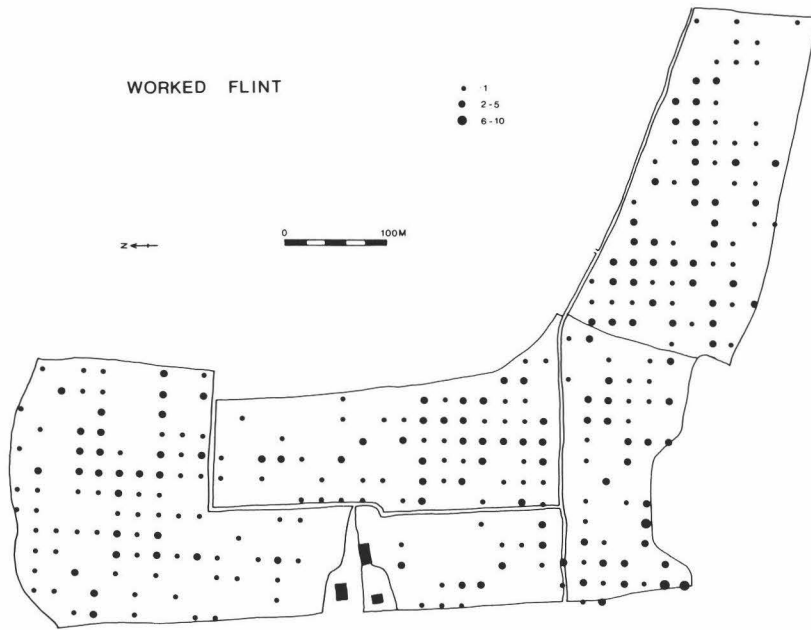


Fig. 3. Distribution of All Flintwork.

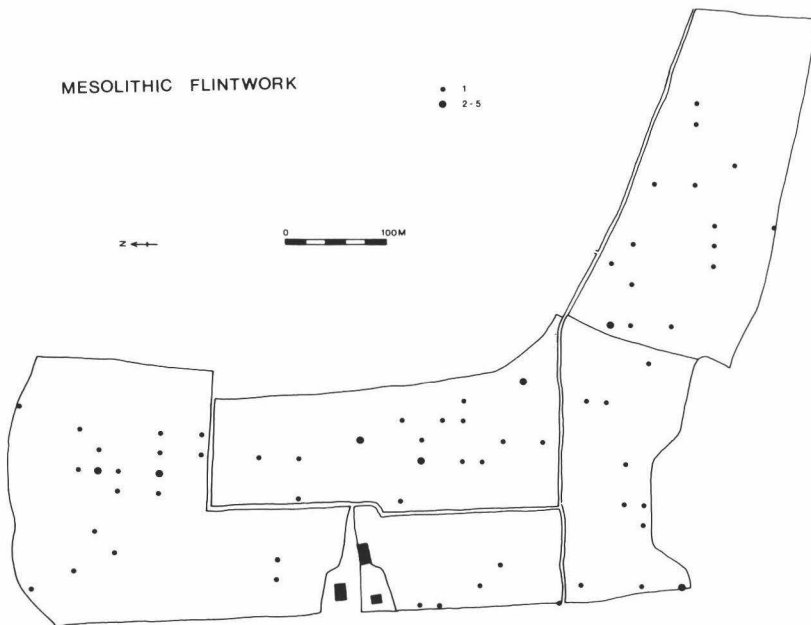


Fig. 4. Distribution of Mesolithic Flintwork.

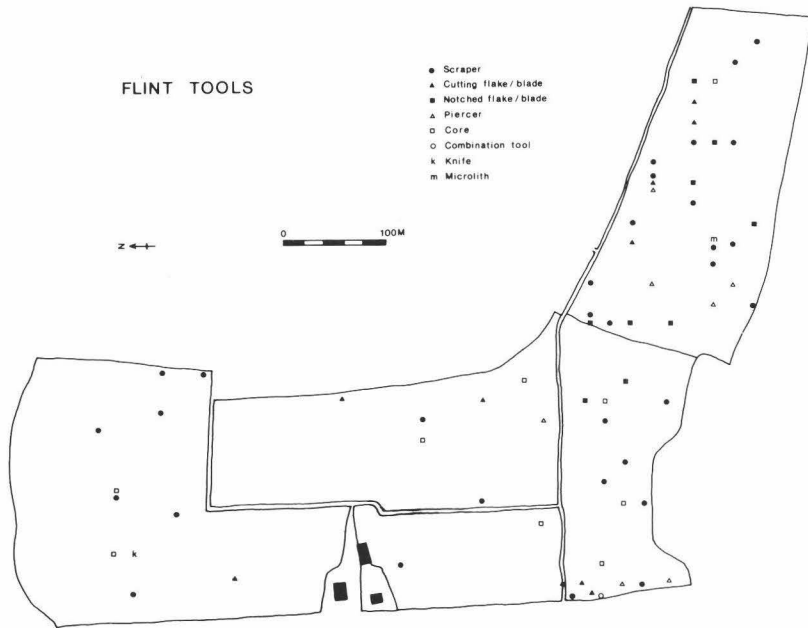


Fig. 5. Distribution of Flint Tools; all periods.

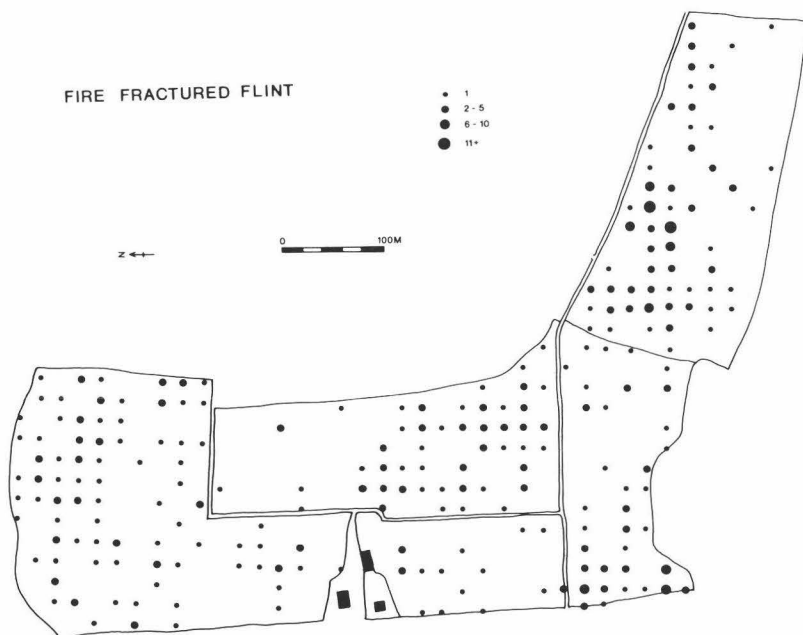


Fig. 6. Distribution of Fire fractured flint.

distribution pattern is supported by the substantial quantity of Mesolithic flintwork found during the excavation of the medieval farmstead at Muddleswood (Butler, forthcoming), and previous chance finds in the area (Wymer 1977). Although the Mesolithic material was found across all the fields (Fig. 4), it is concentrated in fields N11 and N8, which supports the previous view that there was a hunting camp at this location (Holgate, 1987).

Evidence collected suggests the production of blades and bladelets from small carefully prepared cores, and the utilisation of these pieces as implements or in the production of microliths. Also produced were scrapers, piercers, cutting flakes and blades and notched pieces. These suggest that a wide range of activities was taking place here, all connected with the hunting, collection, and preparation of food.

A small number of axe thinning flakes found in the survey provide some evidence for axe resharpening being carried out in the Mesolithic and Early Neolithic, and includes a single ground axe flake. Later flintwork dating from the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age was also found in every field, but was mainly concentrated in a number of areas in fields N5 and N6 (Fig. 3). The major concentration of flintwork, corresponds to a similar concentration of fire fractured flint and prehistoric pottery at the west end of field N6. This probably indicates a settlement at this location in the Bronze Age, however it is likely that a large part of this site will have been removed in the construction of the existing A23 road. The distribution of Bronze Age material suggests that the area was being exploited during that period, with a small settlement or farmstead and some of the land probably under cultivation. Further investigation of field N6 may shed further light on this.

Activity in this area continues into the Iron Age with a small number of pottery sherds being found in the survey. Roman pottery appears to be concentrated at the west end of field N6 (Fig. 8), with other sherds occurring elsewhere in the

survey area. The general lack of Roman sherds on the eastern side of the survey area is interesting, as this is less than a kilometre from the Roman villa at Danny (Blencowe, 1862). The majority of the sherds found (59 per cent) are of East Sussex Ware, although a number of grey and red sandy wares also occur in Field N6. The concentration of Roman pottery here suggests an activity area, probably a settlement or farmstead, which seems to occupy the same spot as the earlier Bronze Age site. There did not appear to be any Roman building material at this site, although any evidence for buildings may also have been removed during road construction.

There does not seem to be any evidence for activity between Roman and medieval times. The first suggestion of later activity comes from a few sherds of Saxo-Norman ware, normally given a date range of 950–1100 A.D. (Barton 1979). Medieval pottery was found in all the fields (Fig. 9) indicating extensive activity here in medieval times. The greatest quantity of pottery occurred in field N5, adjacent to the medieval site at Muddleswood. This site may have been a small farm occupied in the 12th/13th centuries (Butler, forthcoming), in which case the area, or part of it, covered by the survey could have been cultivated by the occupiers. This would explain the distribution of pottery across the fields, where it was spread during manuring. The larger concentration close to the Muddleswood site could indicate more intensive cultivation here, or simply that being close to the site it was easier to dispose of waste material here.

By the late medieval period the Muddleswood site was no longer occupied, and the area of the site had become pasture. Presumably some activity continued in the area, but the next evidence for occupation is a concentration of post-medieval pottery (Fig. 10) and building material in the north-east corner of Field N11. This concentration relates to the site of 'Breach Land' as described in documentary evidence dating to 1582 (Holgate 1987). Two buildings are marked at this location on the

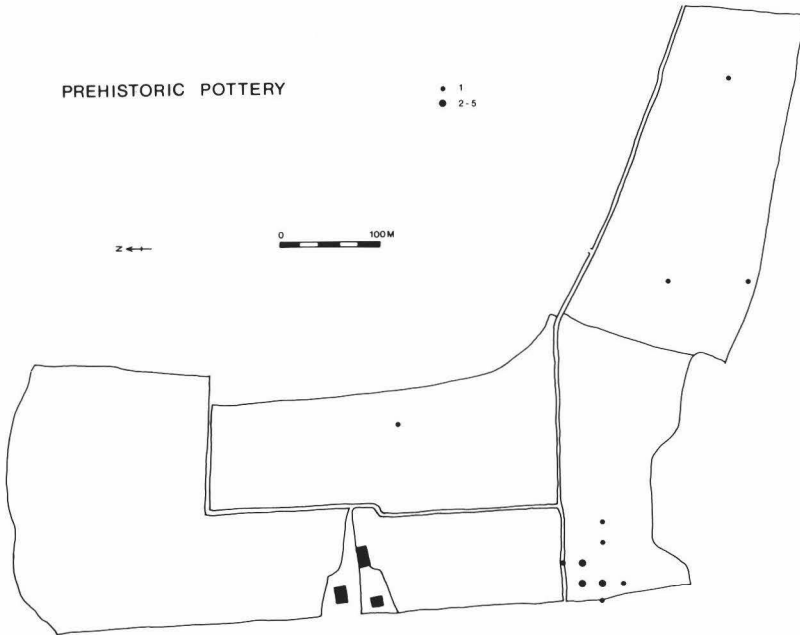


Fig. 7. Distribution of Prehistoric Pottery.

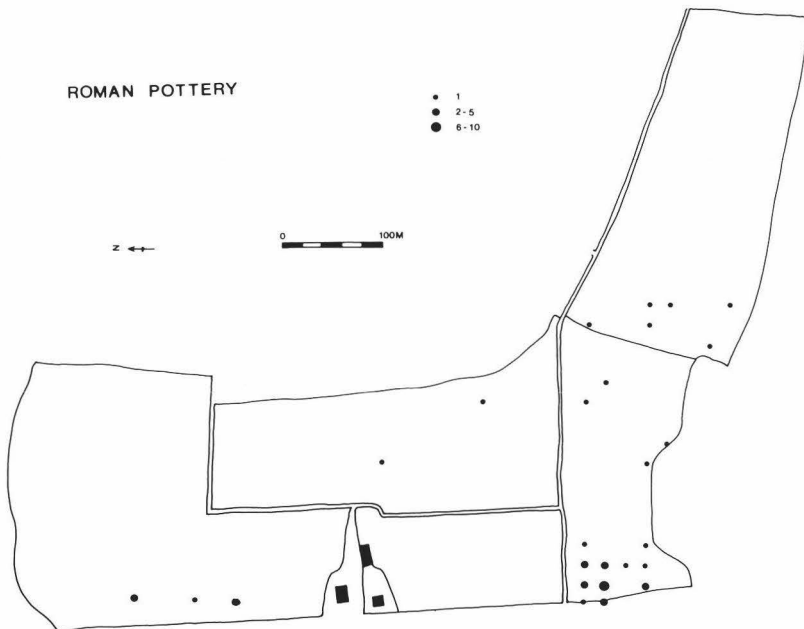


Fig. 8. Distribution of Roman Pottery.

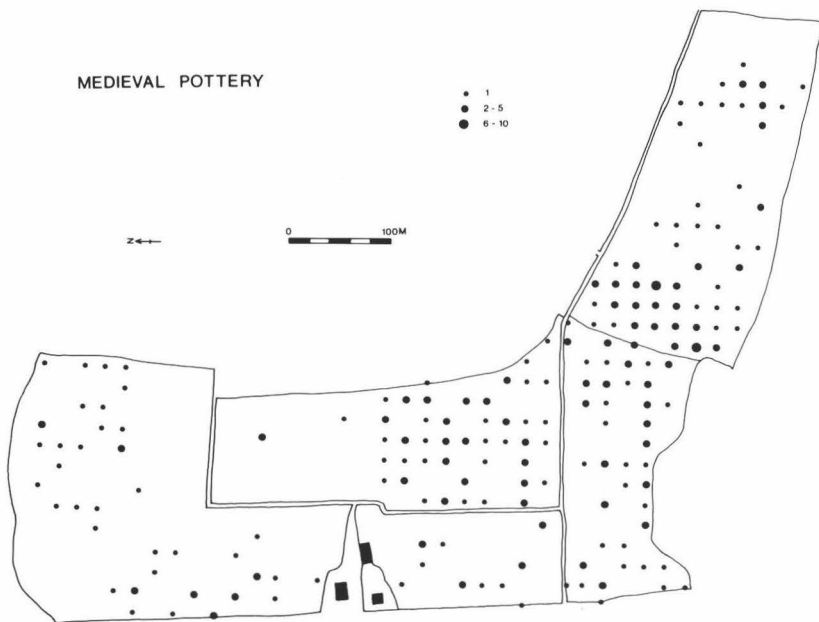


Fig. 9. Distribution of Medieval Pottery.

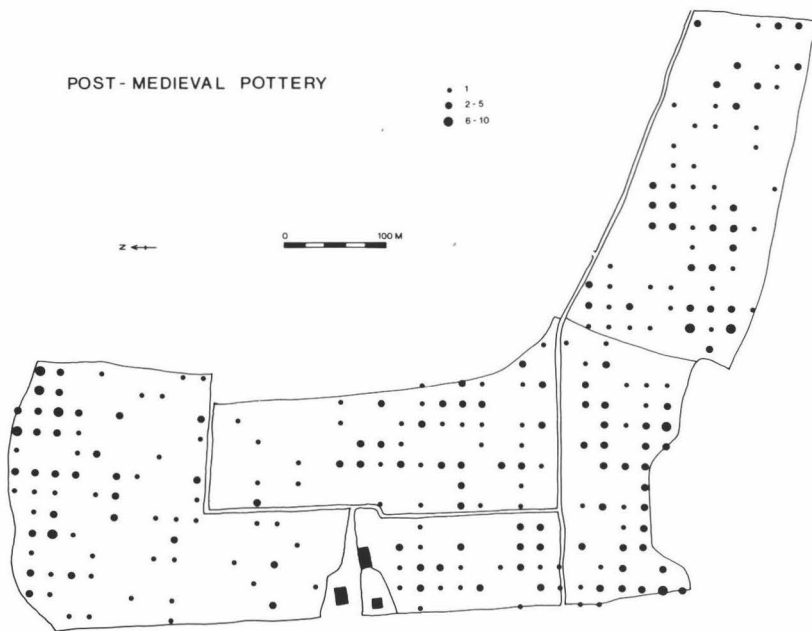


Fig. 10. Distribution of Post-Medieval Pottery.

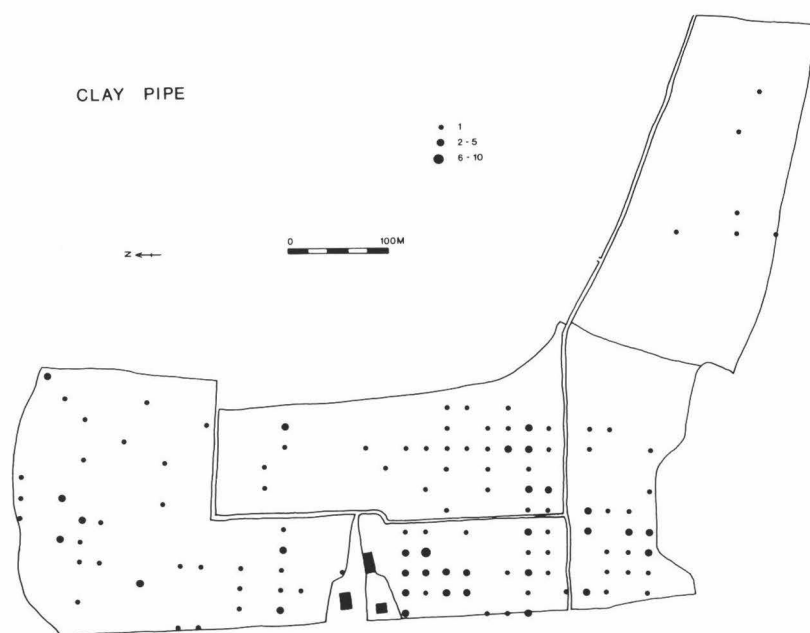


Fig. 11. Distribution of Clay pipe.

Danny Estate map of 1658 (East Sussex Record Office, ACC 2096). By 1868 the main buildings of Breechland Farm had moved to their current location on the London to Brighton road, and only a single building remained at the original location, (E.S.R.O., ADA 228). This last remaining building, a barn, was pulled down in the early part of this century, since which the whole of the area covered by field N11 has been cultivated. The change in location of Breechland Farm probably occurred around the turn of the eighteenth/nineteenth century, as large quantities of clay pipe found around the current farm (Fig. 11) can be dated to the period 1770 to 1867 (see Appendix). This implies more intensive use of the land closer to the farm, a fact possibly borne out by the map of 1868 which refers to these fields as the House Garden and Market Garden.

In conclusion, the survey has produced evidence for activity from the Mesolithic to the present day. Three possible new sites, Mesolithic, Bronze Age and Roman, have been identified, and useful information obtained which will assist in the interpretation of the medieval site at Muddleswood. The more recent evidence collected during the survey seems to support the documentary evidence found for this area.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the farmer, Andrew Nelson, for allowing me to carry out the survey, and Lawrence Gaston who assisted with the fieldwalking.

APPENDIX

Breechlands Farm, Hurstpierpoint
Clay pipe
Decorated items and Makers Initials

- A. Decorated stem with flower/leaf design. The words [J]SMITH and BRIGHTON on opposing sides of stem. Probably John Goldsmith of Brighton, 1826–46. Field N6.
- B. [J]GHTON and S.DR on opposing sides of a plain stem. Maker unknown. Field N7.
- C. M .GOLD[] on stem near bowl. Probably Mary Goldsmith of Brighton, 1845. Field N7.
- D. Stem decorated with flower/leaf design. [J]TH on stem. Probably John Goldsmith of Brighton, 1826–46. Field N8.
- E. BRIGH[] and [J]RAPE on opposing sides of a plain stem. Probably John Drape of Brighton, 1832–67. Field N11.
- F. The letter 'G' on one side of the heel, other side illegible. Could be one of a number of makers. Field N7.
- G. The letters 'P' and 'I' on opposing sides of the heel. Possibly James Pitt of Chichester, 1770–1810. Field N6.
- H. The letters 'P' and 'I' on opposing sides of the heel. Possibly James Pitt of Chichester, 1770–1810. Field N11.

Source: D. R. Atkinson. 'Sussex Clay Tobacco Pipes and the Pipemakers'.

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