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THE MIDDLE AVON VALLEY SURVEY: A STUDY IN SETTLEMENT HISTORY

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"The river here,
That like a serpent through the grassy mead,
Winds on, now hidden, now glittering, now in sight,
Nor fraught with merchant wealth nor famed in song."
(Southey, on 'The River Avon' 1797)

ABSTRACT

The report describes the results of a fieldwalking survey carried out between 1979 and 1986 in part of the Avon valley north of Ringwood, Hampshire. The survey was largely carried out in 'non-site' mode; the methods used are described and their impact on the results examined. The lithic material dating to the mesolithic to bronze age periods recovered during the survey is analysed in relation to the local ecology, and land-use patterns based on this analysis are suggested; specific consideration is given to the evidence of burnt mounds. Patterns of occupation and land-use from the iron age to the medieval period are then documented and discussed.

BACKGROUND

Prior to the survey project the middle Avon Valley had received relatively little archaeological attention. In this it made a considerable contrast with immediately surrounding areas. The New Forest had a tradition of fieldwork going back a considerable time which had led to the discovery of Romano-British pottery kilns, Bronze Age barrows and numbers of enigmatic 'boiling mounds' (Pasmore and Pallister 1967). To the west, the chalklands of the Hampshire–Dorset border had also seen a great deal of fieldwork and work on Cranborne Chase was being carried out at the same time as the survey (Barrett *et al* 1981, 1991). The upper part of the Avon Valley is in another classic area where much work has been carried out, that of Stonehenge.

Specific sites and finds known prior to the survey are marked on the various period maps, but the only major excavations which had taken place were those on the Roman villa at Rockbourne (RCHM(E) 1983), to the west of the survey area in the north, and at Downton, to the north of it, where Mesolithic and Late Neolithic material were recovered (Higgs 1959, Rahtz 1962) and a Roman villa excavated (Rahtz 1963).

The lack of previous attention then was in itself one major reason why this part of the Avon Valley was selected for survey. However, there were also a number of others. Two years prior to the beginning of the survey project it had been suggested (Schadla-Hall and Shennan 1978) that in order to develop an understanding of the landscape history of Wessex and place its well-known monuments in perspective, it was essential to carry out large-scale programmes of fieldwalking in both monument rich and less well-known areas. In the paper a series of areas were suggested for detailed examination on the basis that between them they would provide a broadly representative sample of the different parts of the region and its different environments. The Avon Valley was one of the areas proposed. Environmentally it contrasted sharply with two other areas of Hampshire which had been selected for attention: part of eastern Hampshire, where a fieldwalking survey was carried out in 1977–78 (Shennan 1985), and the Basingstoke area, where a fieldwalking programme was begun at the same time as that in the Avon Valley.

There were also two more specific considerations. First, given the importance of the Upper Avon area in the late Neolithic and earlier

Bronze Age, with its extensive range of monuments, and the evidence of its links with the area at the mouth of the Avon, around Hengistbury Head, where rich late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age finds have also been made, it seemed of interest to investigate whether these developments affected the area in between.

The second consideration was in many ways the most important of all. This part of the Avon Valley had an active local archaeological society, led by Jeff Collins and Tony Light, and the project was envisaged as one in which the energy and enthusiasm of the local society would be used to contribute to the broader archaeology of Wessex in a productive fashion, at low cost.

Physical description of the survey area

The survey area lies on the western edge of the county of Hampshire in the valley of the river Avon to the immediate north of the small market town of Ringwood, with the town of Fordingbridge roughly in its centre (Figure 1). It covers an area of five kilometres east–west by 12 kilometres north–south and was designed to span the breadth of the valley and the slopes on either side (Figure 2).

Topography

The river Avon runs down from the chalklands north of Salisbury, reaching the sea at Christchurch. The stretch of the valley included in the survey area is in its lower reaches so the gradient is low and the valley broad. The current floodplain is narrow and marked by a low terrace (see Figure 2), but previous river courses have produced a wide flat plain across the valley floor. The cross-section diagrams (Figure 3) show the shape of the valley in the north of the area, in the middle and in the south and they are extended to show its wider setting. The diagrams show a flat valley floor 2–3 km wide with valley sides sloping up, quite steeply in places, onto low plateaux, the Dorset chalklands to the west and the New Forest to the east. Both sides are crossed by tributaries of the main river.

Geology and soils

The geology of the area is shown in Figure 4 . Its location on the western edge of the Hampshire Basin means that it is largely covered by characteristic Tertiary deposits, including Reading Beds, London Clay, Bagshot Sands and Bracklesham, and in particular Barton, Beds. These consist of various mixtures of clay, coarse and fine sand, and gravels. In the north-western corner of the area the underlying Upper Chalk outcrops. In places these ancient deposits have been covered by more recent ones. Plateau gravels were deposited on a higher level than the current river, at a time when the river was larger and the sea-level higher. Valley gravels dominate the surface of the study area, deposited in a colder climate when thaw floods gave the river more power to transport larger material over a wider flood area, because of the increased rate of flow. Within the current flood plain are deposits of alluvium.

The soils are highly derivative of the geology. Vancouver (1810) described them as 'rich gravelly loams'. The soil survey describes the soil of the floodplain as made up of calcareous alluvial gley soils while the other common soil types are various kinds of argillic brown earths. To what extent the soil cover in prehistory was different is unclear, but it may well have included a loess element (Barrett, Bradley and Green 1991, 16–17).

Today the floor of the valley is predominantly arable farmland with some permanent grassland (see Figure 5), although there is a small urban concentration at Fordingbridge together with a scatter of small villages. On the eastern valley side, marking the edge of the New Forest, there is heathland and rough pasture, as well as woodland.

THE SURVEY

The survey was begun in 1979 and carried on until 1986. Fieldwalking was carried out regularly at weekends during the winter throughout this period by members of the Avon Valley society who then took the material home and washed it. Finds processing sessions were held at intervals to sort the material and record it. Initially the work was co-ordinated by Stephen Shennan but as time went on the Society took the leading role under the direction of Tony Light.

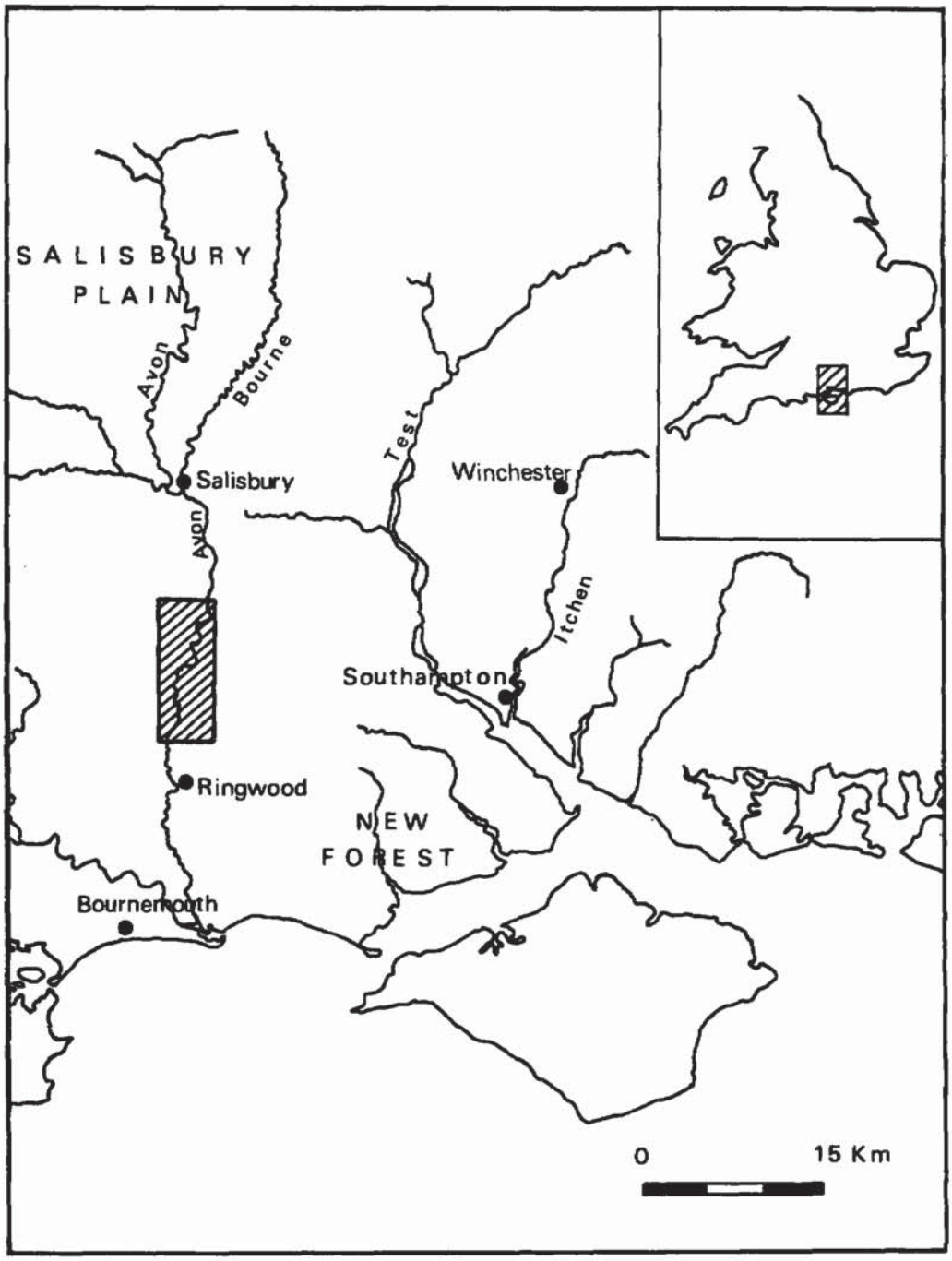

Fig 1. Location map of southern central England showing the survey area

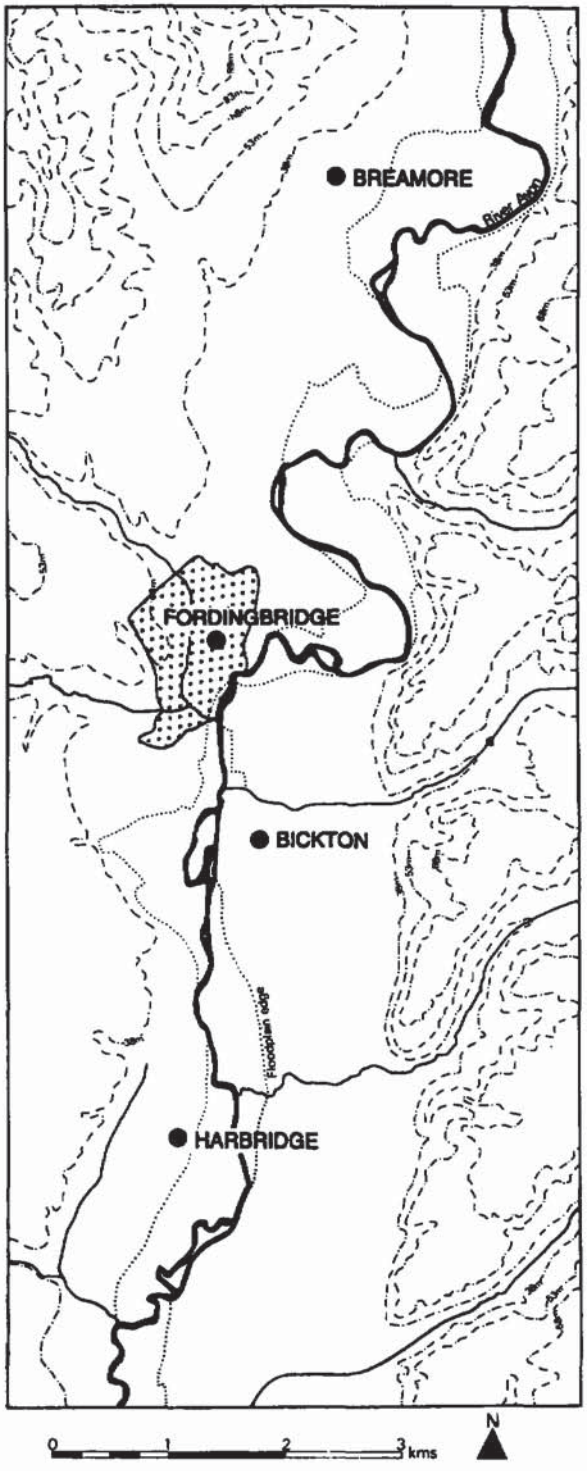

Fig 2. Topography of the survey area

The fieldwalking methods used were essentially the same as those used in the earlier East Hampshire survey (Shennan 1985). The units of survey were the agricultural fields and the method adopted was line-walking, supplemented by later grid-walking in some cases. All material visible along each line was collected for subsequent analysis. The interval between the lines was 15 paces and each line was collected as a unit, with no subdivisions. This is an admittedly coarse-grained procedure, its virtue being ease and speed of operation. Its main deficiency from the point of view of the 'siteless' mode of survey and analysis adopted (see below) is that find density figures per field potentially depend to some extent on the varying sizes of the fields. In the case of the Avon valley survey the fields are small in relation to the size of the survey area and range of variation in field size is relatively slight, so the aim of looking at broad patterns of occupation through time in relation to such aspects as topographic zones or locational trends is in no way problematical.

The intention of the survey was to ensure that a representative selection of the area was examined and consistent efforts were made to achieve this. However, like all fieldwalking projects, this one depended on the availability of arable fields with good surface visibility in the winter, and in the event some parts of the area provided little or no opportunity for survey during the whole eight winters that it lasted. The total area surveyed was 768.4 ha.; its distribution in relation to current land-use is shown in Figure 5 and it can be seen that despite considerable efforts representativeness was not achieved. It was possible to examine very little on the eastern side of the valley; most of the fields are in the plain on the western side, with some fields represented on the chalk slopes in the north-west. Clearly, the partial nature of this distribution means that it is necessary to be cautious in the conclusions drawn from the fieldwalking data. However, it is certainly possible to infer general trends in landuse patterns from the data collected, along the lines described and applied below.

A basic assumption of the survey, reflected in the methods adopted, was the importance of the

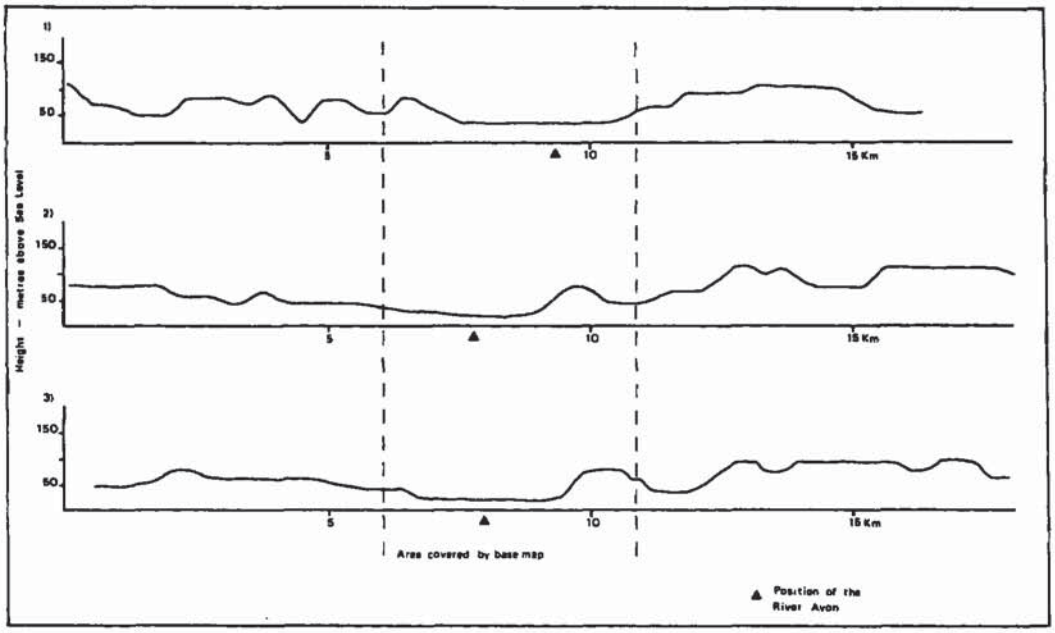

Fig 3. Cross-sectional shape of the survey area and its wider region

so-called 'non-site' approach. From this perspective the aim of a survey should not be to define a limited number of sites set in a landscape without other human activity, but to record the varying artefact densities across the countryside which will relate to different activities carried at different times and places with varying frequencies. The definition of sites, usually meaning settlements, on the basis of surface artefact scatters is extremely problematical, albeit for some periods more than others; while it may be possible to define Romano-British settlements on the basis of surface evidence with relative ease, it is much more difficult for the Mesolithic. Furthermore, even for the Roman period a site-based approach could overlook the possible evidence for manuring scatters related to agricultural practices; while for earlier prehistoric periods, in fact up to and including the earlier Bronze Age, there may well not have been relatively long-term fixed settlements of the type we know from later prehistory. The indications point much more to the recurrent use of particular landscape zones in which succeeding occupations were not in the same place but overlapped one another, gradually producing a very diffuse scatter of material over a period of time in the way described by Foley (1981a) for East Africa. In any event, the designation of a certain area as a 'site' should be a conclusion reached after data collection and analysis rather than an assumption built in to the data collection procedure. This general issue is discussed further below, but we can note here that for the later periods it was possible to define 'sites' in some cases.

All inferences from surface survey to past occupation and activity patterns pose problems which have been extensively discussed in the literature (e.g. Shennan 1985, Haselgrove *et al* 1985, Schofield 1991a) and which mainly revolve round the issue of surface visibility but also to some extent around questions of artefact movement in the ploughsoil. In the case of the Avon Valley survey it is difficult to evaluate these various factors except in general terms. We know,

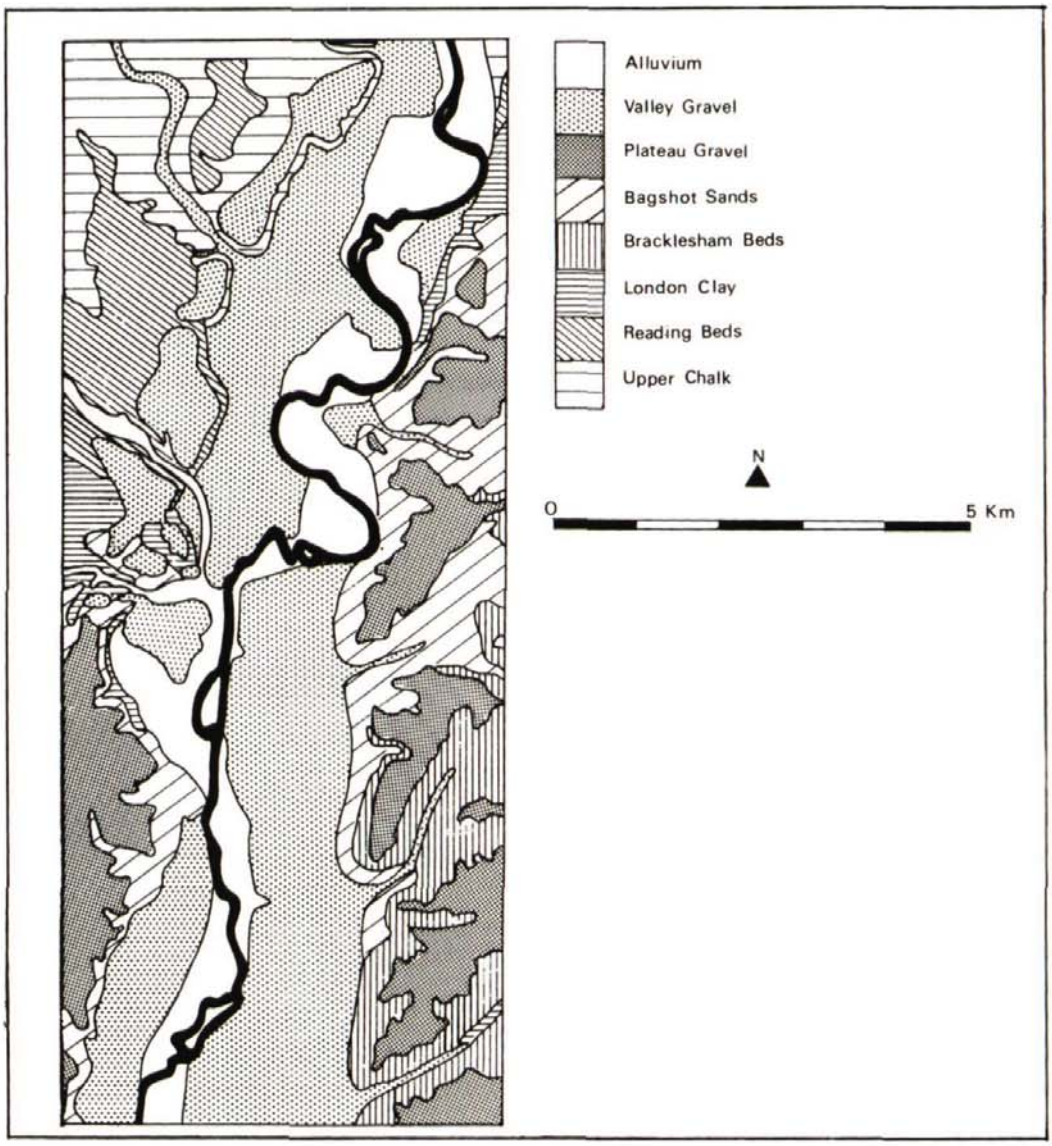

Fig 4. The surface geology of the survey area

simply from the interval between the walked lines, that small concentrations of artefacts have a considerable probability of being missed. We also know that even along the line being walked material will be missed, so that if the density of certain kinds of material over the ground is low in the first place, then it may be missed altogether. The conclusion to be drawn is that large areas of reasonably high density will be discoverable and recognizable most of the time while small and/or low density scatters will be under-represented, perhaps considerably.

As far as artefact movement is concerned, the vast majority of the area surveyed is of very low relief, so material should be broadly in situ and concentrations of artefacts should be the result of human activities rather than natural erosional and depositional ones. However, this does not mean that erosion and deposition did not take place and have an effect on archaeological visibility, despite the low relief. During the excavation of the 'burnt mound' at Harbridge North End Farm, in a low relief location by the bank of a small stream on the Avon terrace, it became apparent that the mound had been discovered because the top of it was slightly higher than later deposits. Figure 6 shows a section through the material which overlies the Bronze Age land surface on which the burnt mound lay. It can be seen that it is over 0.5 m thick and the sherds marked on it, concentrated at the bottom of the profile, are all Medieval. There has clearly been an episode of erosion following on clearance and agricultural activity in the immediate vicinity, probably associated with the establishment of the settlement at nearby North End Farm. If this phenomenon can be generalized, and given the extensive agriculture and clearance of the Medieval period and later in the valley there is no reason why it should not, there may well be areas, especially along small streams which may or may not still exist, where the in situ earlier material is hidden and any early material on the surface is derived from up-slope. This then provides another reason for considering the patterns in the surface material from the survey area in generalized terms rather than specific ones.

Survey results

As we have explained already, the outcome of the survey was not a catalogue of sites discovered, since it was not site-based. Rather, for each field there was a total number of finds separated into different categories. Since the fieldwalking method was constant throughout, dividing the number of finds by the field area produced a density figure for each find type which was comparable for all fields; the raw results are presented in appendix 1 (see fiche). The reasons

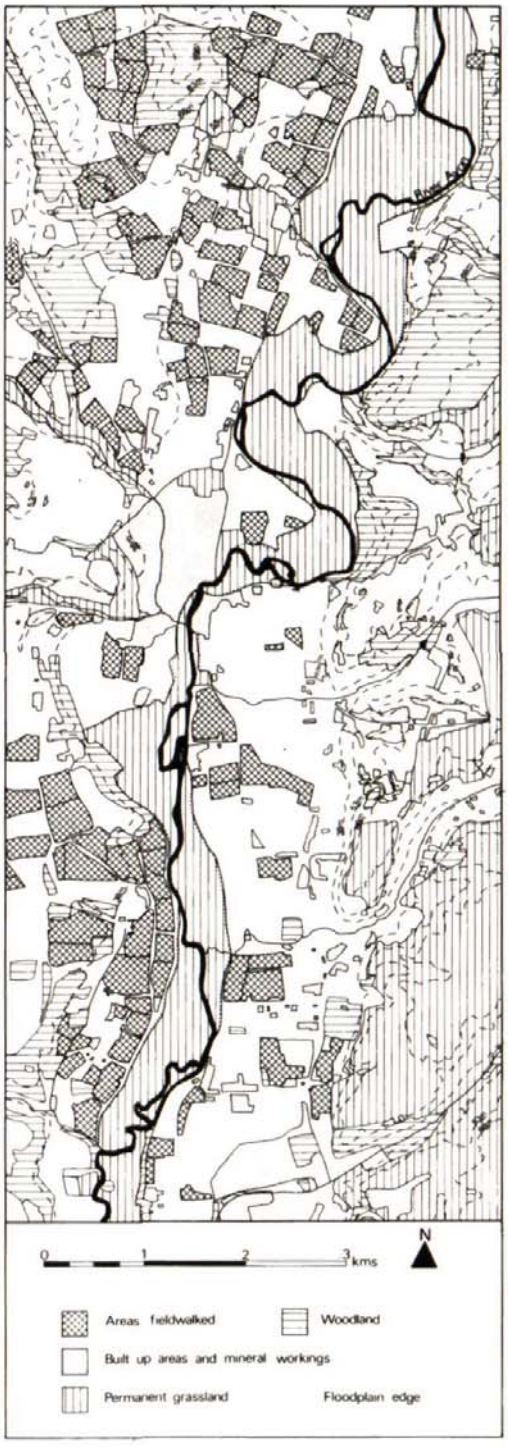

Fig 5. Current land-use of the survey area

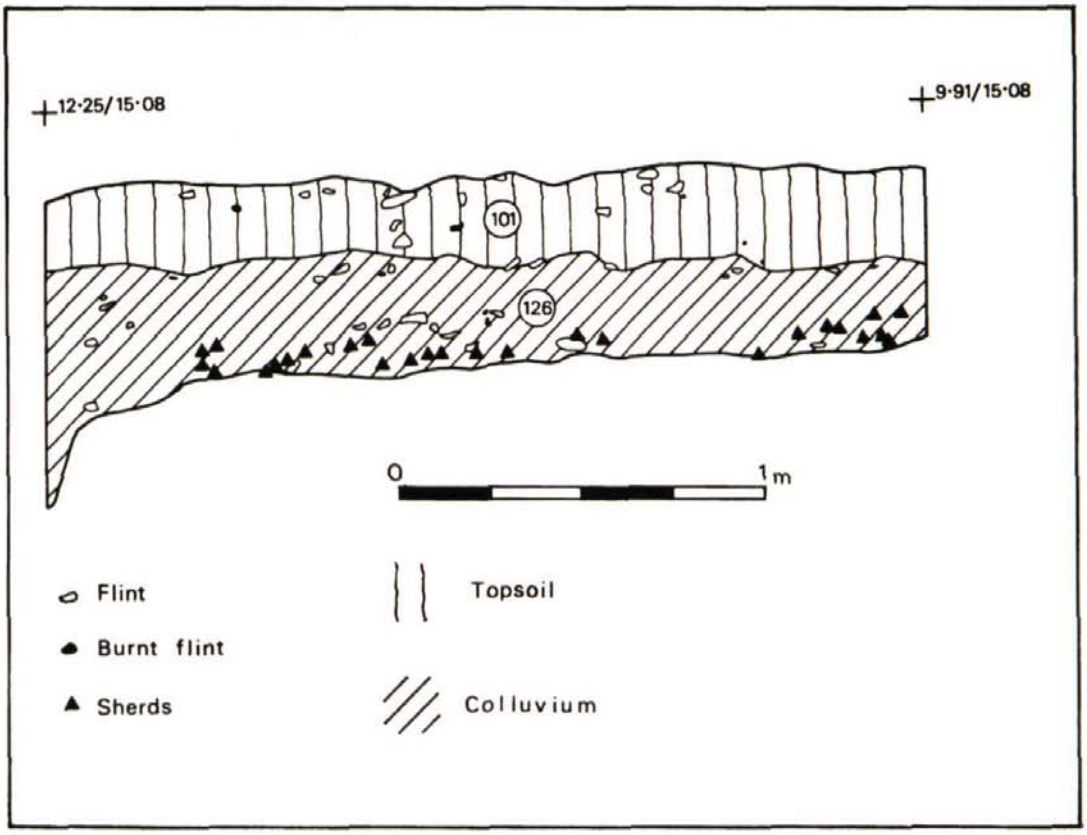

Fig 6. Section through the soil profile adjacent to the burnt mound at North End Farm, Harbridge

for varying densities between fields can potentially be many and varied. They might arise, for example, from differences between the geology of the fields which affected past settlement density, but another possibility is that the conditions while fieldwalking varied in the extent to which they were favourable for the recovery of finds from one day to another, or because one field was walked while the ground was bare while another was examined when the crop was already well through. An investigation of the role of such distorting factors carried out for the East Hampshire survey (Shennan 1985) suggested that, taken together, they did play a role in affecting inter-field variation, although not an enormous one, while the effect of any individual distorting factor was very small. Perhaps more to the point, it emerged from those analyses that there was only a very small amount of overlap between the effects of the distorting variables and those of the environmental factors actually of interest (Shennan 1985, 37). This implies that while such distorting factors may affect whether or not things are found in a particular place, they do not affect the study of patterning in the relation between survey results and environmental variables at a regional scale

In order to investigate such issues in the case of the Avon Valley survey, information was collected during the fieldwork on the following factors:

i) Visibility conditions (3 values): a subjective

assessment of how good conditions were for seeing material on the ground surface.

ii) Dryness (3 values): a subjective assessment of the dampness of the ground surface during fieldwalking.

iii) Ploughing (4 values): an indication of whether the ground was recently ploughed, ploughed and weathered, harrowed or sown.

iv) Crop state (4 values): a subjective assessment of the thickness of any crop growing in the field.

v) Light (3 values): a subjective assessment of the degree to which the light was even or characterised by strong light and shade.

vi) Geology (3 values): the surface geology of the field, chalk, gravel or Reading Beds.

Analyses were then carried out of the way in which these factors affected the densities of the most common types of material recovered during the survey: burnt flint, struck flint, and prehistoric, Romano-British, Medieval and Post-medieval pottery. The argument is that if, for example, geology does not affect the density of medieval pottery, then although this density will vary from one field to the next, broadly speaking, fields will have the same density of medieval pottery regardless of their geology. In these circumstances we might conclude that people in the medieval period settled and exploited the area without regard for any geologically-based environmental distinctions. The main method used to carry out these analyses was one-way analysis of variance (see e.g. Blalock 1972). Where appropriate, data were transformed so as to meet the assumptions of the method, or the less powerful one-way analysis of ranks (Kruskal-Wallis test) was used. In the case of those categories of material which occurred only rarely it was impossible to use either of these techniques. In these cases, the data were recoded into presence/absence form and a chi-squared test carried out on the recoded data; thus, for example, presence/absence of Romano-British pottery in a field could be cross-tabulated against the three values of the dryness variable – wet, damp and dry – and a chi-squared value obtained. The results are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 Summary of statistical analysis of fieldwalking results

Variable	Find type	Transformation	Method	Probability
Dryness	burnt flint	log	ANOVA	0.56
	flint	log	ANOVA	0.32
	R-B pottery	P/A	chi-squared	0.81
	Medieval pot	Rank	Kruskal-Wallis	0.56
	Post-med pot	P/A	chi-squared	0.002*
	Saxon pot	P/A	chi-squared	0.56
	Iron Age pot	P/A	chi-squared	0.69
Visibility	burnt flint	log	ANOVA	0.37
	flint	log	ANOVA	0.57
	R-B pottery	P/A	chi-squared	0.074
	Medieval pot	Rank	Kruskal-Wallis	0.092
	Post-med pot	P/A	chi-squared	0.0009*
	Saxon pot	P/A	chi-squared	0.41
	Iron Age pot	P/A	chi-squared	0.54
Ploughing	burnt flint	log	ANOVA	0.17
	flint	log	ANOVA	0.22
	R-B pottery	P/A	chi-squared	0.06
	Medieval pot	Rank	Kruskal-Wallis	0.047*
	Post-med pot	P/A	chi-squared	0.005*
	Saxon pot	P/A	chi-squared	0.66
	Iron Age pot	P/A	chi-squared	0.19
Crop Thickness	burnt flint	log	ANOVA	0.13
	flint	log	ANOVA	0.24
	R-B pottery	P/A	chi-squared	0.55
	Medieval pot	Rank	Kruskal-Wallis	0.29
	Post-med pot	P/A	chi-squared	0.0005*
	Saxon pot	P/A	chi-squared	0.61
	Iron Age pot	P/A	chi-squared	0.052
Light	burnt flint	log	ANOVA	0.97
	flint	log	ANOVA	0.59
	R-B pottery	P/A	chi-squared	0.08
	Medieval pot	Rank	Kruskal-Wallis	0.093
	Post-med pot	P/A	chi-squared	0.29
	Saxon pot	P/A	chi-squared	0.50
	Iron Age pot	P/A	chi-squared	0.38
Geology	burnt flint	log	ANOVA	0.26
	flint	log	ANOVA	0.73
	R-B pottery	P/A	chi-squared	0.39
	Medieval pot	Rank	Kruskal-Wallis	0.027*
	Post-med pot	P/A	chi-squared	0.18
	Saxon pot	P/A	chi-squared	0.41
	Iron Age pot	P/A	chi-squared	0.2

log = logged values of densities used for analysis
Rank = the fields ranked in order from most to least dense and the ranks analysed
P/A = presence/absence of the type in question in each field recorded and the resulting frequencies analysed

It should be noted that a study of the effect of variation between individual fieldwalkers was not carried out. This was so for two reasons: first, all the analyses described below remained at the field level, so variation between walkers within fields was not relevant; second, the East Hampshire study already mentioned had shown that inter-walker differences accounted for only a very small proportion of the variation in the results (Shennan 1985, 42–3) and could, in effect, be ignored if the aim was to look at regional patterns rather than be certain of the results from a particular piece of ground.

It is clear that in the majority of cases there is no evidence that the various factors listed above have an impact on finds densities, since the results for the most part are not statistically significant at the 0.05 level, or anywhere near it. However, comments are appropriate on those results which were significant, or nearly so.

In the case of dryness, only one find type produced a significant result, Post-medieval pottery. Examination of the table indicated that lower numbers of occurrences of this type were associated with wet ground conditions.

For visibility, Post-medieval pottery was highly significant and Romano-British pottery moderately so. Again, inspection of the table indicated that for Post-medieval pottery there were higher numbers of occurrences in the medium visibility category and lower numbers in the poor category. For the Roman pottery there were more in the good category and less in the bad.

In the case of the ploughing variable, Medieval and Post-medieval pottery were significant at the 0.05 level; for the Medieval, unweathered ploughing was associated with greater numbers of occurrences, for the Post-medieval it was the sown category. Although Romano-British pottery approached significance at this level, the numbers of observations in the key categories were too small to have confidence in the result.

For the crop thickness variable, Post-medieval pottery again proved highly significant, and Iron Age pottery moderately so. In both cases the pattern was the counter-intuitive one that numbers of occurrences were greatest for those fields in which the crop was thickest, and lowest where it was not through. The reasons for this are unclear. Perhaps the extra weathering of the surface makes a difference or shade cast by the crop actually makes it easier to see certain things on the surface.

No finds type proved significant at the 0.05 level for the light variable although two were significant at 0.1, Romano-British and Medieval pottery. For the latter the greatest number of occurrences was associated with even light but for the former with sunlight and shadow conditions.

Finally, only Medieval pottery was significant in relation to geology, with more occurrences on gravel and Reading Beds than chalk. It may be that this analysis misses subtle patterns in the distribution of finds in relation to geology since it was necessary to group the fields into rather coarse geological categories in order to carry out the statistical examination.

The lithic densities were not affected by any of these factors, which suggests that they were not affected by the survey conditions, and thus that we can have some confidence that the distribution patterns discussed in the following section on the earlier prehistoric periods are genuine ones relating to patterns of past settlement. Similarly, the fact that geology is also not significant as far as lithic density is concerned can be seen as confirming the point made below that high lithic densities may arise from a variety of different activities, including occupation and raw material exploitation, with different geological constraints. The only find type to be consistently affected by a variety of different factors to do with survey conditions was Post-medieval pottery. It may be that a disproportionate number of fields containing Post-medieval pottery were examined in the spring when crops were not only sown but well through, weather was better and fields were dry. However, it is not possible to substantiate this suggestion.

SETTLEMENT AND LAND-USE IN THE MESOLITHIC, NEOLITHIC AND BRONZE AGE PERIODS

Introduction

This section presents evidence for prehistoric activity in the form of lithic artefacts recovered by surface collection during the Middle Avon Valley Survey. As has been described previously

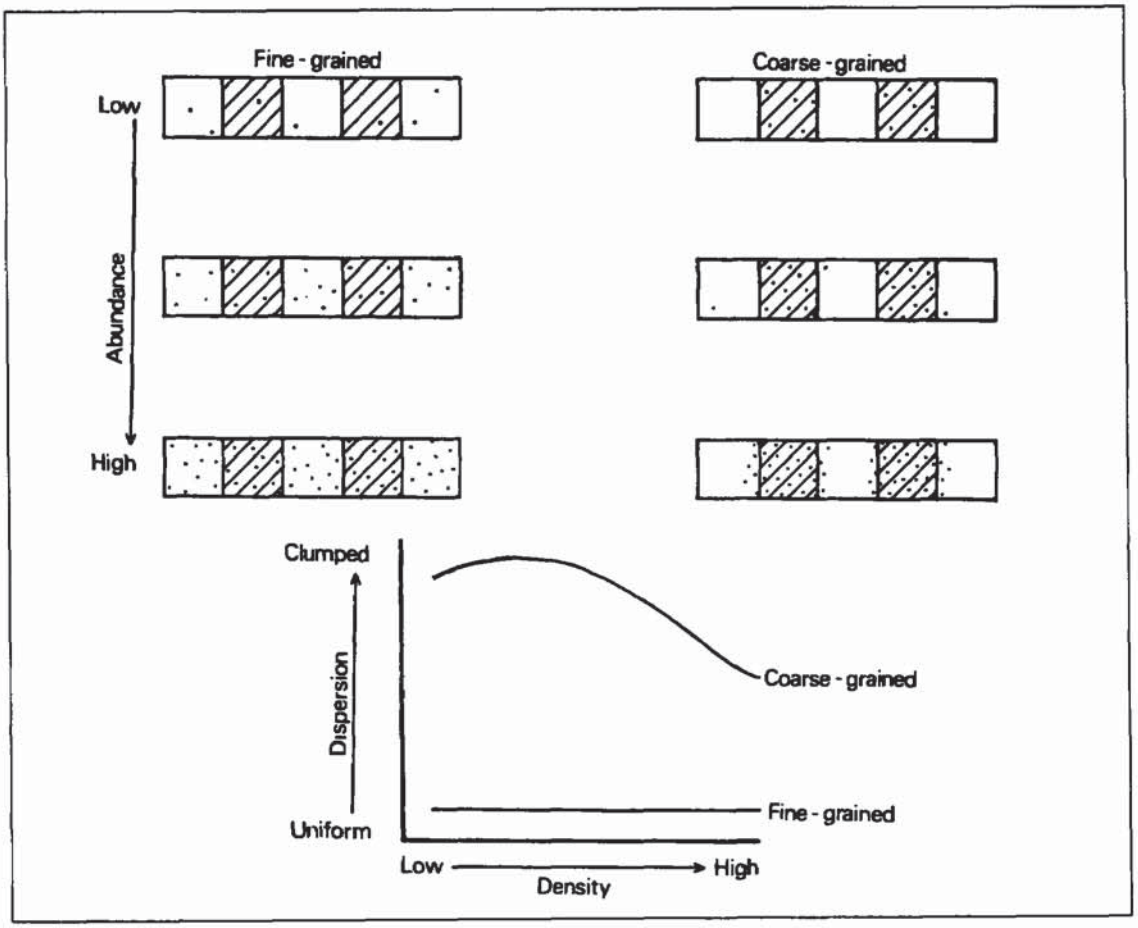

Fig 7. Patch occupancy patterns for fine and coarse-grained adaptation

(Schofield 1987), the presence of lithic artefacts in the ploughsoil does not necessarily indicate the survival or presence of prehistoric settlement sites; consequently it is argued that to attempt to locate "sites" in these terms has little value as an aid to research or resource-management. Instead, it is suggested that broad variations in the density and form of lithic artefact collections are of more interest, as these will illustrate the nature of the adaptive response of stone-using communities to environmental variation at an appropriate scale, both spatial and chronological.

Adaptive responses are variable and will manifest themselves in archaeological terms depending on the extent to which land-use strategies were continuous or repetitive (and thus accumulative in terms of artefact loss and discard). The greater the continuity or repetition (or, the more "coarse-grained" the adaptation), the more visible and distinct the archaeological traces are likely to be. Figure 7 (after Weins 1976 and Bryant 1974) illustrates this point, displaying the variable nature of the relationship which may occur between site location, occupation density and the distribution of resource patches. This is presented in "map" form at the top of Figure 7 (uniform or fine-grained on the left; clumped or coarse-grained on the right) and as a graph at the

bottom. A "coarse-grained response" is characterised by the clumping of occupation sites in relation to resource patches; a "fine-grained response", by contrast, has the appearance in plan of a uniform dispersion largely unaffected by the distribution of resources. (The archaeological correlates of this model are discussed more fully and presented as a table in Schofield 1991b, 162.)

This point about the patterning of human behaviour in response to the distribution of resource patches is not new, though it is generally confined to studies of hunter-gatherer communities. Gamble (1986, 304), for example, has made this point in his review of Palaeolithic archaeology, while Binford has stated that, "the processes which cause site patterning are long-term repetitive patterns in the positioning of adaptive systems in geographic space. Site patterning derives from repetition, or lack thereof, in the spatial positioning of systems" (1982, 6).

This approach is favoured here as it acknowledges and attempts to overcome, albeit in a crude way, certain problems with interpreting lithic artefacts recovered by surface collection. These problems, which include variable density as a result of environmental processes such as colluviation, are well documented elsewhere (e.g. various papers in Schofield 1991a) and are only discussed further where they have a direct bearing on interpretation. The methods of analysis have also been discussed previously (Schofield 1991b) and, as with the Meon Valley Survey, emphasis is placed on a combination of artefact density, the composition of artefact collections and their relationship with environmental variables such as soil type, geology and topography. In an attempt to enhance the clarity of these relationships six environmental zones were defined. These do not represent an exhaustive characterisation of environmental variation in this part of the valley, but group the walked fields in their respective areas into zones which are broadly homogeneous with respect to certain environmental characteristics. They are illustrated schematically in Figure 8 and described in Table 2; all fields included in this analysis fall into one of the six zones as

Table 2 Environmental characteristics of the six ecological zones

Area	Geology	Topography	Soil
1	Chalky gravel and river alluvium	Low spurs projecting into river valley	Shallow, calcareous and non-calcareous loam
2	Valley gravels	First river terrace	Well-drained fine silty soil
3	Lower chalk with areas of Reading Beds	Chalk downland rising to 100 m OD	Shallow , well-drained calcareous silty soil with patches of clay-with-flint
4	Complex mosaic of sands, clays and gravels with a narrow strip of alluvium	Two tributary river valleys at a point entering the main valley system	A mosaic of silts and loams
5	Valley gravels and sands	On and below first river terrace; little topographical variation	Poorly drained soil subject to waterlogging and flooding
6	Valley gravels	Below first river terrace; little topographical variation	Poorly drained soil, subject to periodic flooding

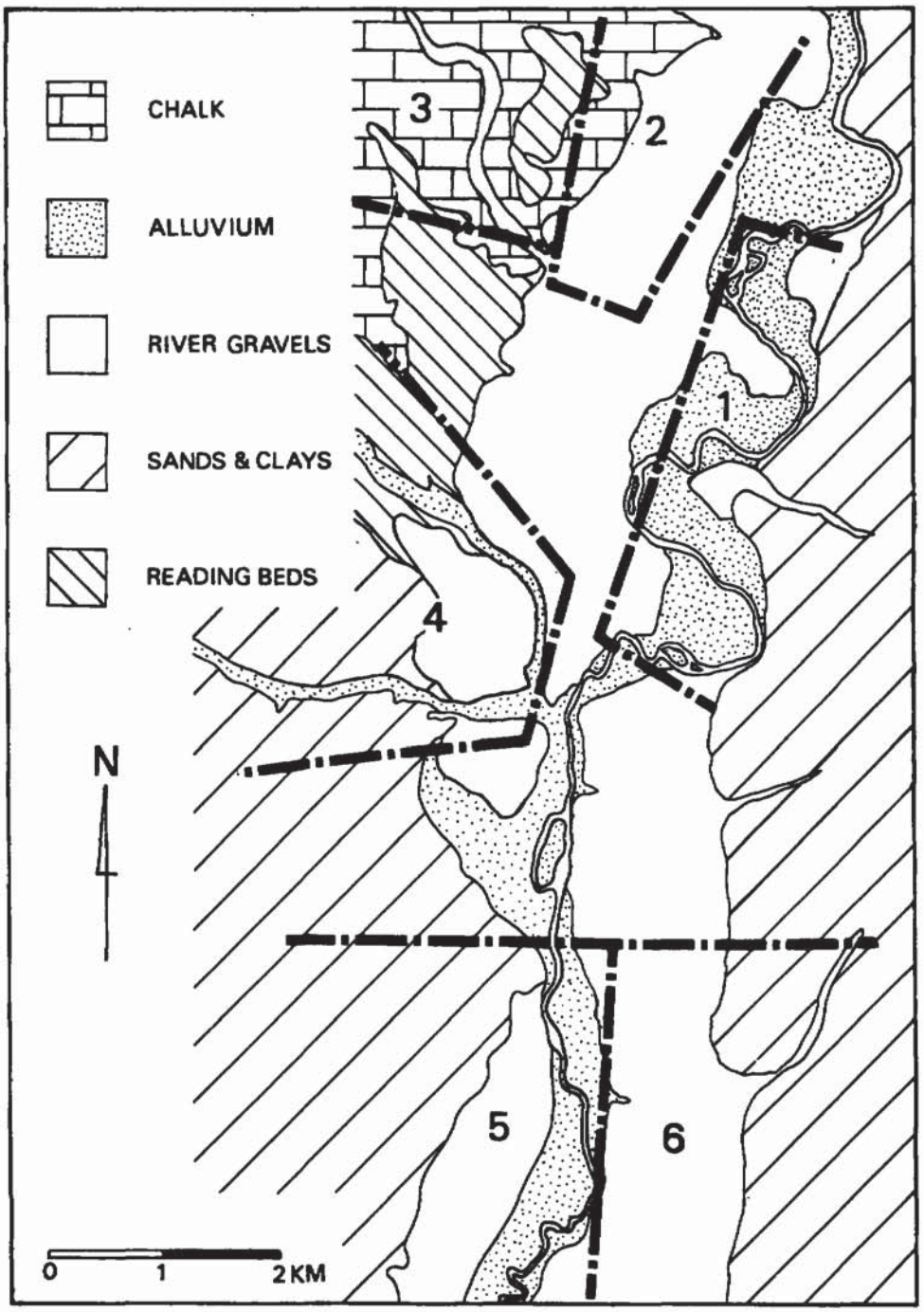

Fig 8. Distribution of ecological zones within the survey area; geology has been slightly generalised

illustrated. The preliminary results of this analysis have already been published (Schofield 1987) but will be reviewed (and, where necessary, updated) in this report.

To facilitate this analysis, a number of variables were recorded for each artefact recovered (Table 3). Rather than discuss each in detail, two general points can be made. First, that central to interpreting broad patterns of land-use and occupation among stone-using communities is the core-reduction sequence (ie. the sequence of events from the location of raw material, its reduction, and finally tool manufacture); this is illustrated in Figure 9. Of interest here is the point that, where raw materials and settlement are spatially discrete, evidence for occupation and industrial activity is more likely to appear archaeologically distinct; where they occur in the same place, the archaeological record will appear blurred. Clear and distinct patterning was noted in results from the Meon Valley (Schofield 1991b); these justified the use of this approach and it is adopted again here. A second variable is the frequency of retouched artefacts and tool types. Except for certain types of artefact which may be described as "extractive" and more associated with off-site behaviour than with tasks which may occur in and around the home (e.g. arrowheads, axes), most retouched artefacts are home-base specific. In particular, scrapers, which are maintenance tools, will be used more on settlements or at temporary camps (Jeppesen 1984). Such areas should therefore be easily distinguished adopting the approach outlined above.

The approach adopted here has much in common with that described by Foley (1981b, and see above), in that it regards the archaeological record as a more or less continuous spatial distribution of artefacts resulting from the continuous nature of human behaviour over a

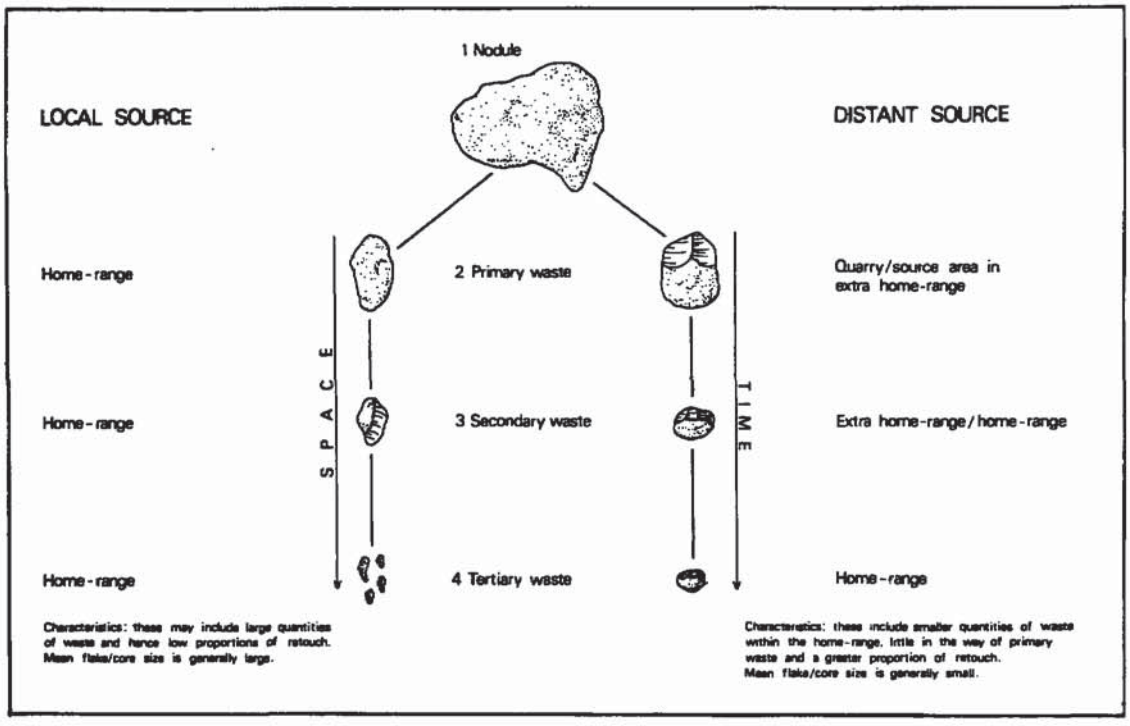

Fig 9. The core reduction sequence and its archaeological correlates

long period of time. The intention of the analysis is broad pattern recognition. Not only is this an important goal in itself at a regional scale but in this case it is also appropriate to the way in which the data were collected, that is to say with the fields walked as the relevant analytical units (see above). Such an approach also places less weight on detailed chronology, appropriately so in the light of the fact that much of the lithic material is undiagnostic waste. The attempt has been made to infer broad chronological patterns of occupation but the difficulties of doing this without the chronological control provided by excavation evidence must be borne in mind.

Table 3 Attributes recorded for lithic analysis

1 6-figure grid reference for field

2 Line number

3 Geology

4 Soil type

5 Topography

6 Artefact category
- i) Flake
- ii) Blade
- iii) Core
- iv) Implement

7 Length

8 Breadth

9 Extent of cortex
- i) Primary
- ii) Secondary
- iii) Tertiary

10 Retouch
- i) Absent
- ii) Present

11 Nature of retouch
- i) Unidirectional
- ii) Multidirectional
- iii) Unifacial
- iv) Bifacial

12 Patination
- i) Absent
- ii) Present

13 Type of raw material
- i) Chalk-derived
- ii) Gravel-derived
- iii) Indeterminate

14 Condition
- i) Complete
- ii) Broken in antiquity
- iii) Recent breakage/ damage (including edge damage)

Finally, as background to the results which follow, it is worth referencing recent and some not so recent research which suggests that, for much if not all of the period in question, mobile (hunter-gatherer and, later, nomadic) communities were prevalent across central-southern England (e.g. Fleming 1971; Thomas 1991). It may also be suggested that both hunter-gatherer and nomadic communities do each produce a distinctive and highly structured archaeological record (Binford 1980; Cribb 1991). At a regional scale, this may appear as accumulations of archaeological debris resulting from repeated visits to the same favoured locations over many years. Evans (1992, 48) has suggested reasons why, in southern England, river valleys should be among those areas favoured for occupation and points out that, in areas without permanent upland surface water, valley bottoms are likely to have been more intensively exploited.

Mesolithic to Bronze Age: the survey results

A total of 9220 lithic artefacts were collected from the 72 fields (covering 473 ha) included in this analysis. In this section the results are first described in relation to aspects of environmental variation; the chronological dimension is then explored, followed by a general interpretation and conclusion. The results described in this section are illustrated by Figures 10–18 and Tables 4–8 and the raw data are presented in appendix 2 (see fiche).

The spatial dimension: adaptive response to environmental variation

The adaptation of stone-using communities to the landscape in which they lived is assessed here in relation to variation in the present landscape. For some aspects of variation, for example topography, little change will have occurred since the last glaciation. For others, including soil type, some changes may have occurred, but are likely to have been on a local scale (e.g. erosion of loess from clay-with-flints on Cranborne Chase (Fisher 1991)). Although it is accepted that such changes may be critical in understanding the distribution and intensity of human behaviour at this scale,

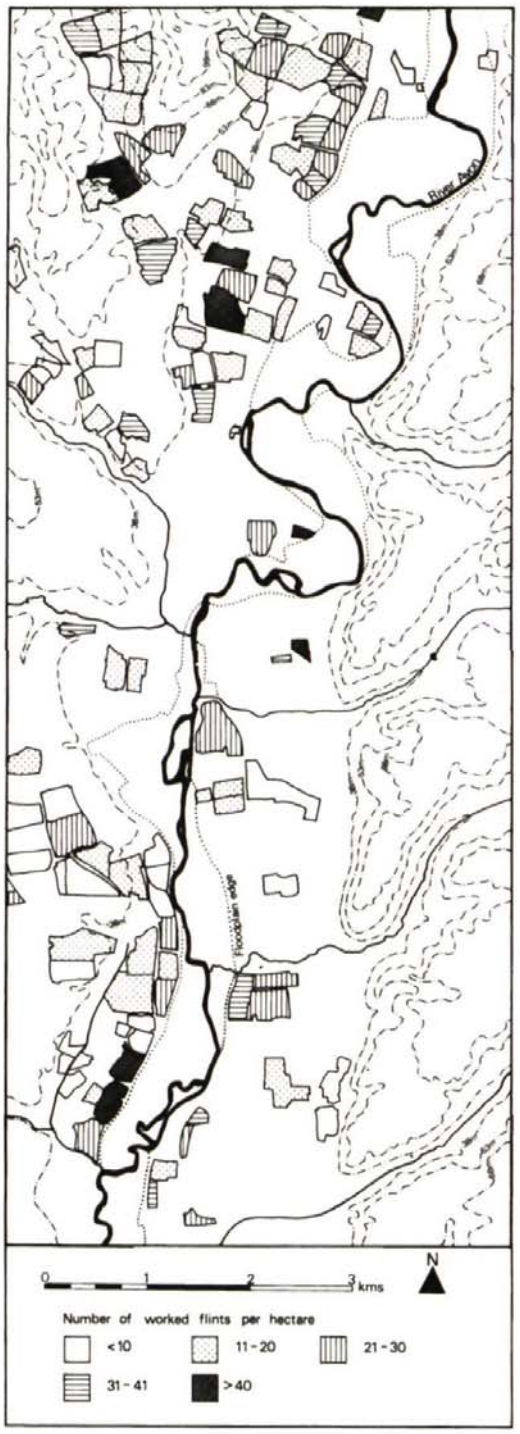

Fig 10. Density variation for lithic artefacts within the survey area

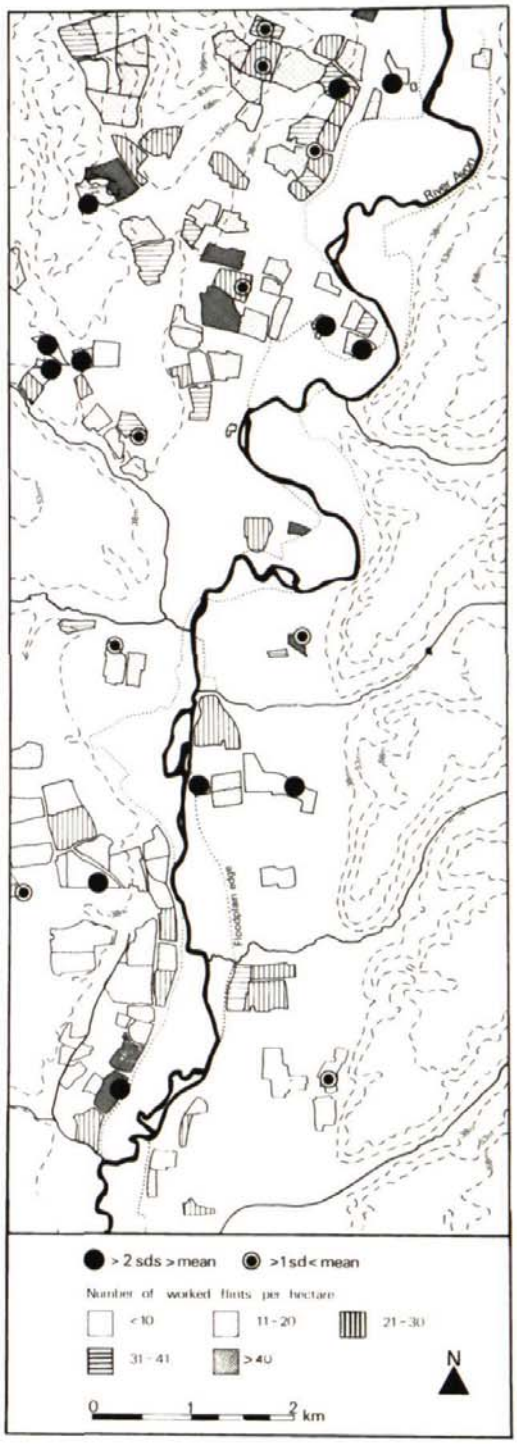

Fig 11. Variation in the frequency of retouched artefacts in the survey area

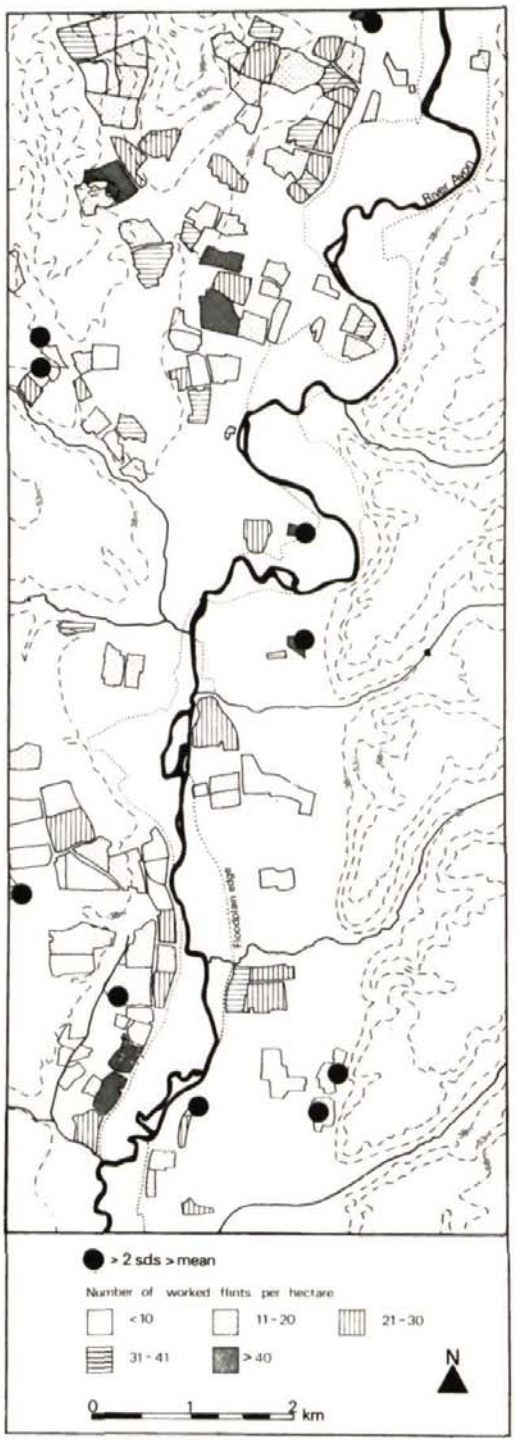

Fig 12. High frequencies of cores in the survey area

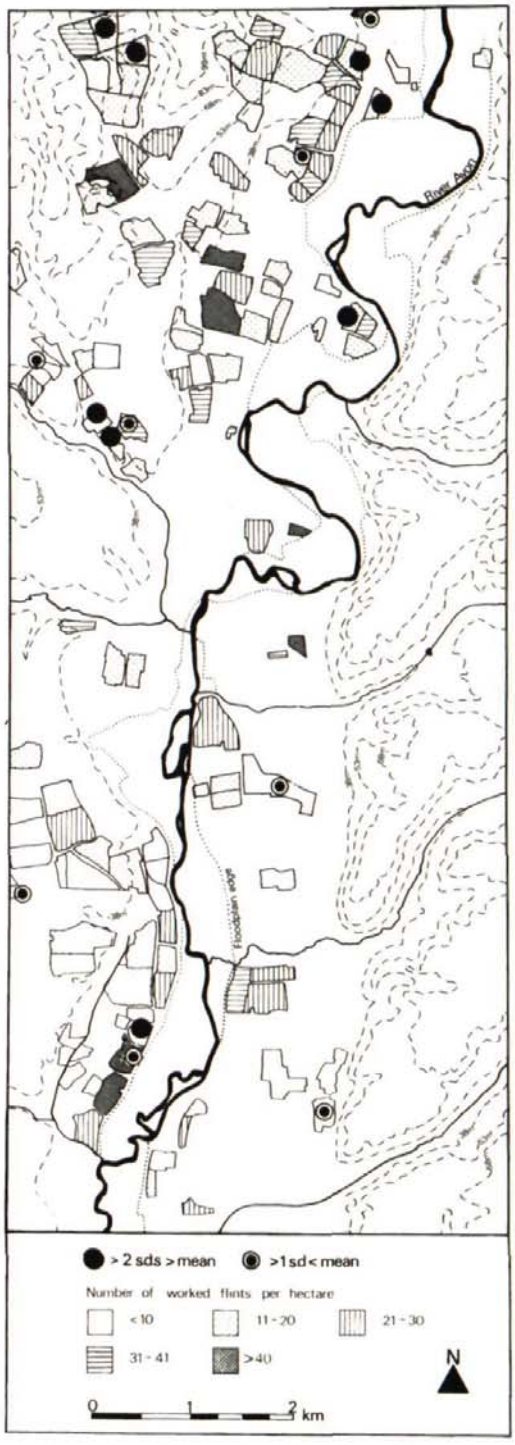

Fig 13. Variation in the frequency of primary flakes in the survey area

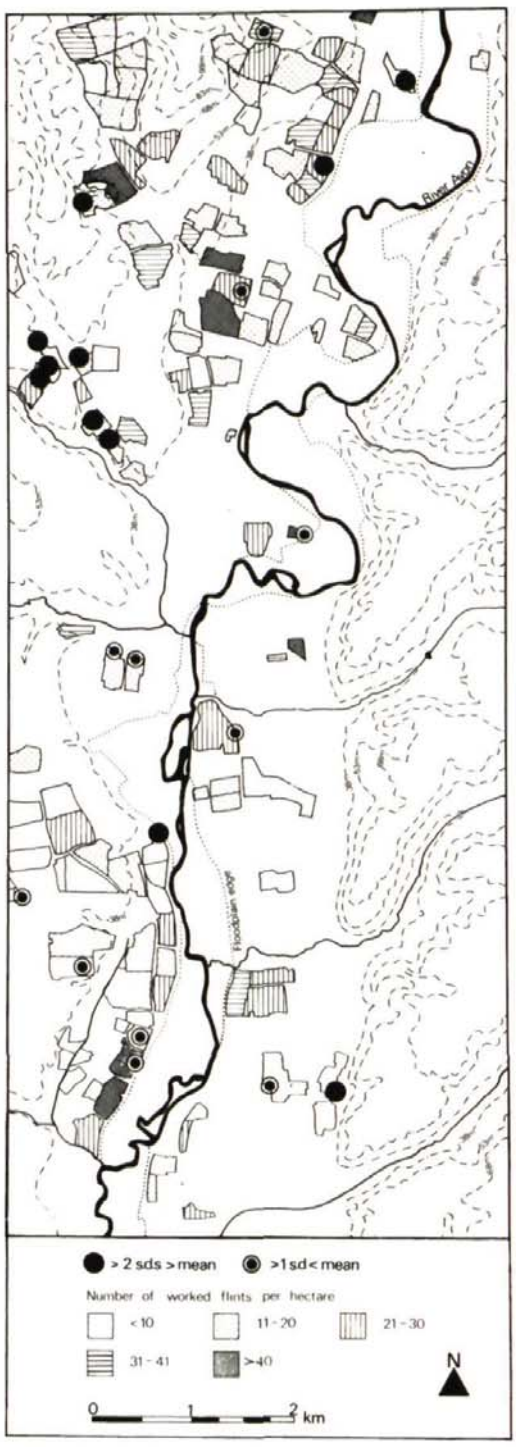

Fig 14. Variation in the frequency of tertiary flakes in the survey area

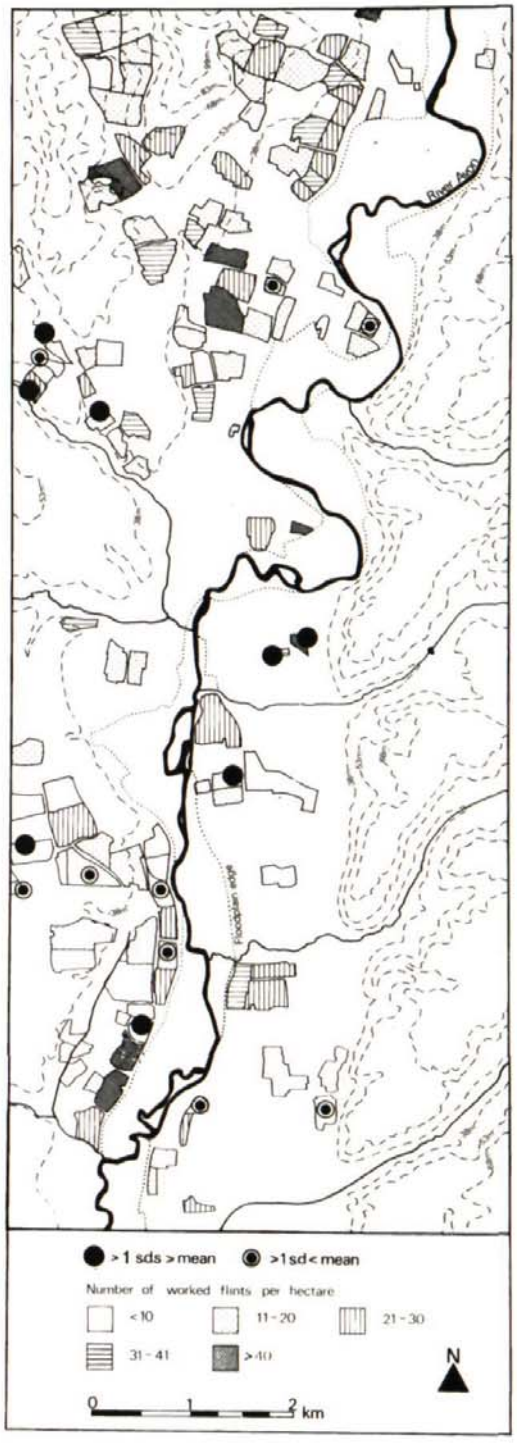

Fig 15. Variation in the frequency of blades in the survey area

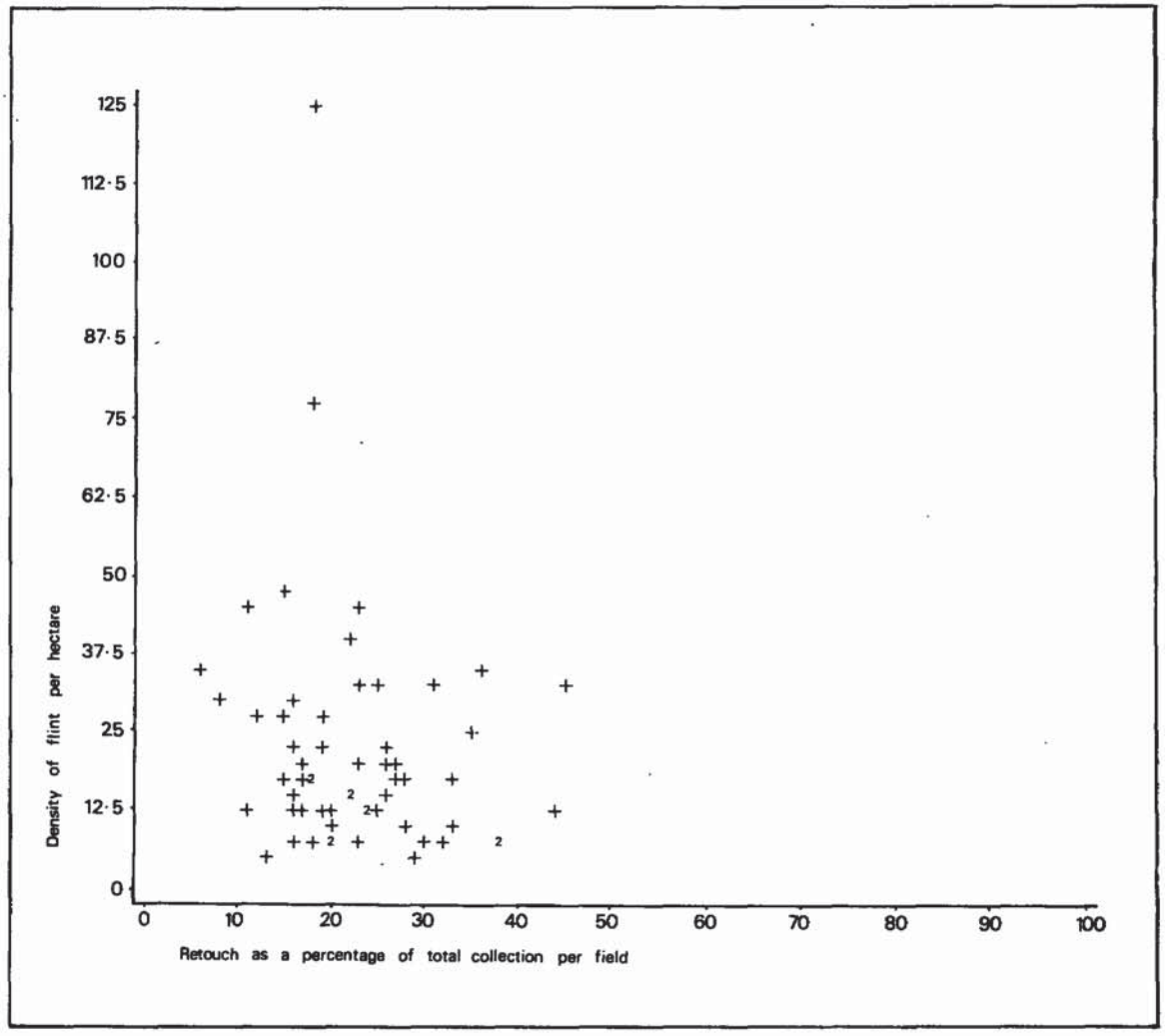

Fig 16. Scatterplot showing the density of flint per hectare in relation to the percentage of retouched items

the six zones used in the analysis (Figure 8) are believed to have retained a degree of integrity, irrespective of such local variation, and are considered useful for investigations at this broader scale.

For this investigation, variation in the archaeological record was analysed in relation to three variables: geology, soil type and topography (Tables 4–6 and 8).

Geology: (Only a single field in this study was situated on alluvium; the artefacts from this field are therefore excluded from the analysis.) In terms of frequency, the highest mean density of artefacts occurred in fields situated on Bagshot Sands (Table 4), although the highest individual density occurred in two adjacent fields on river gravels (76.5 and 124.4 artefacts per ha). The high density values from fields on Bagshot Sands

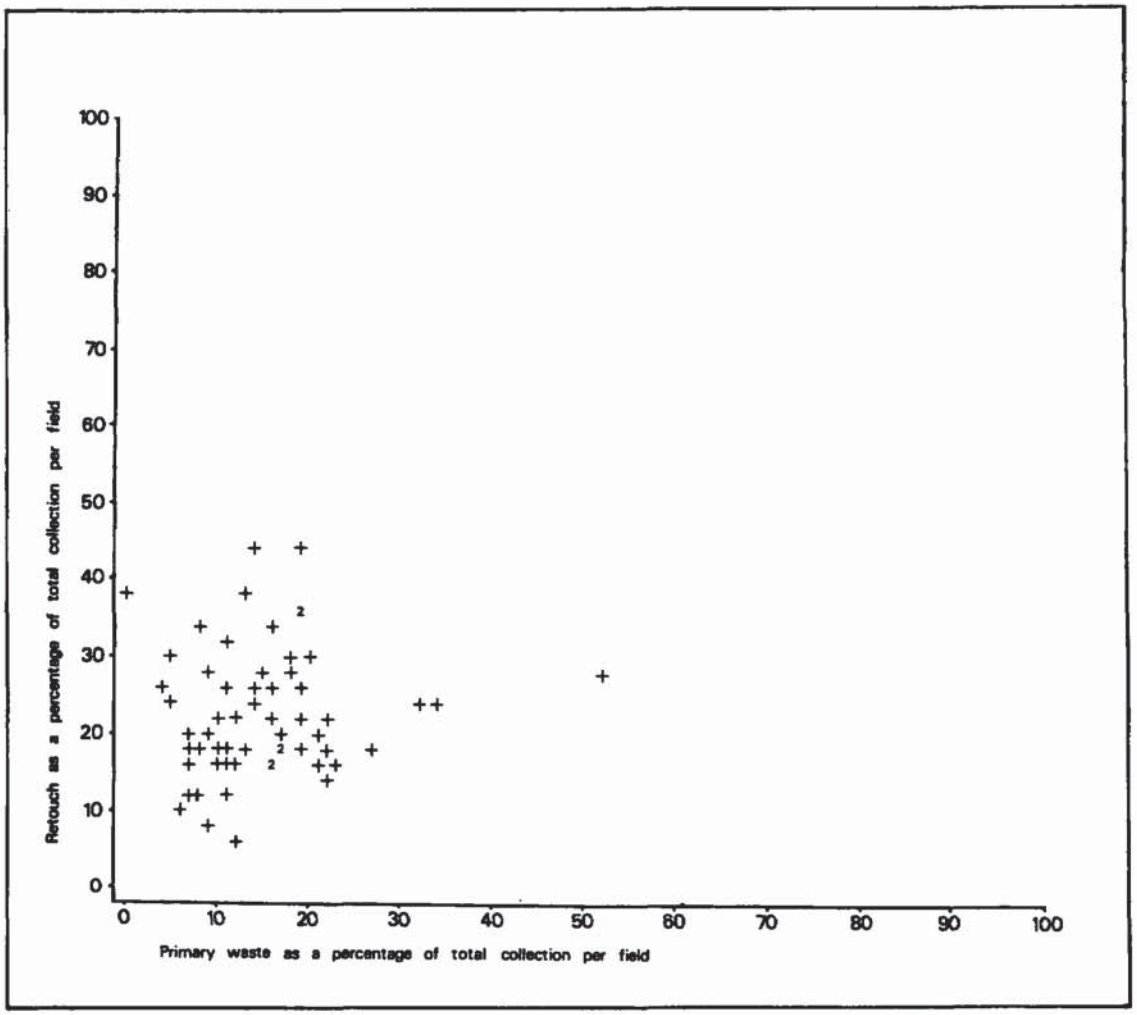

Fig 17. Scatterplot showing the percentage of retouched items in relation to the percentage of primary waste

correspond with a generally high frequency of retouched artefacts and a low frequency of primary or cortical flakes, suggesting that longer-term or regular short-term settlement and not primary reduction or industrial activity was important in this area. By contrast, the Reading Beds support a low overall density of lithic artefacts but high frequency of cores, retouched items and tertiary flakes, again suggesting settlement, but only infrequently and/or for short periods.

In contrast to the results from the upper Meon Valley, the upper chalk produced surprisingly little evidence for industrial activity. Density, which would be expected to be high (Clark and Schofield 1991, 103), is lower than on the Reading Beds and river gravels, while the percentage of retouched material is higher, averaging 25.8% over the six fields investigated. This figure, as with all figures for retouched material in the study area, is suspiciously high and it might be argued that it arises because of a definition of retouch which fails

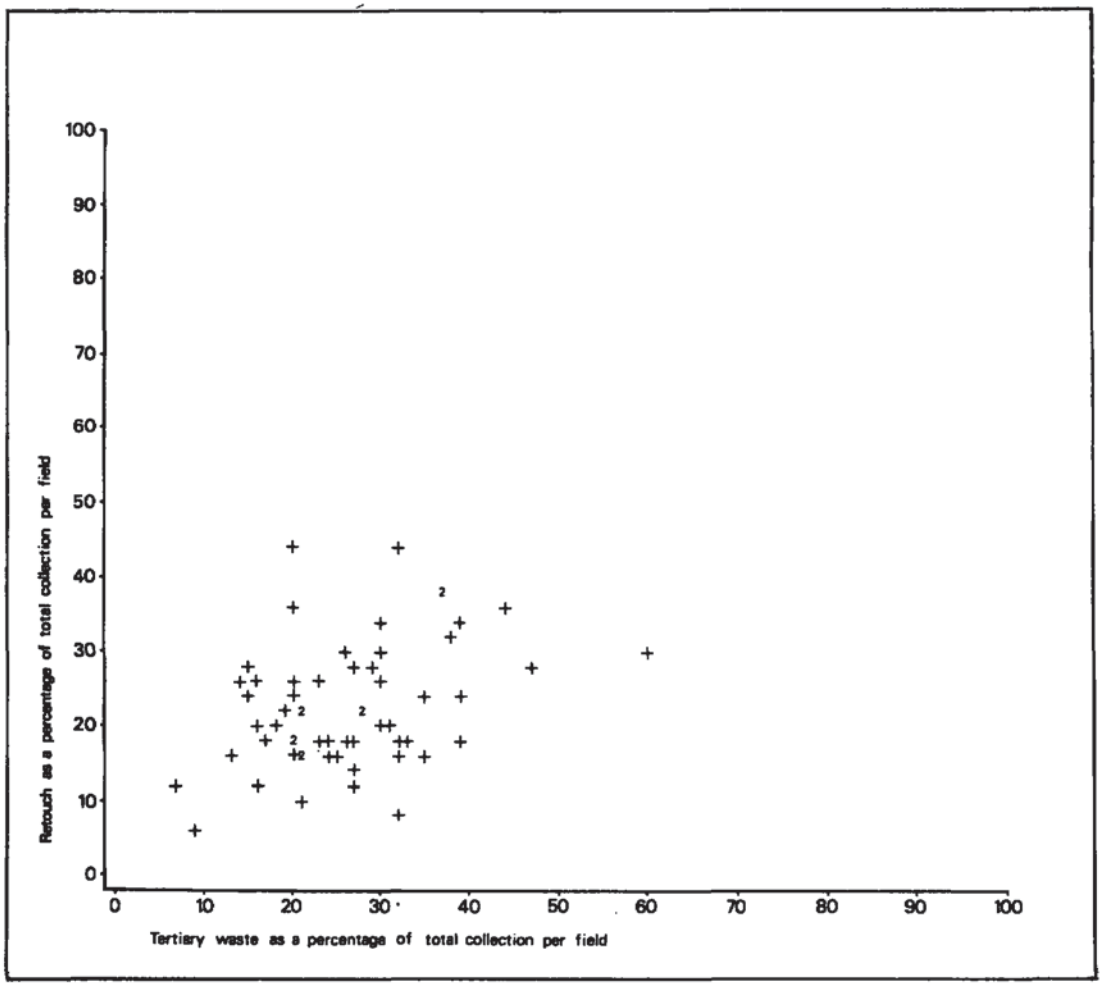

Fig 18. Scatterplot showing the percentage of retouched items in relation to the percentage of tertiary waste

to take into account subsequent edge damage. However, the analysis of the Meon Valley assemblage was carried out by the same person using the same methods and there the proportions of retouch were nearer the normal 5% level. There seems no reason to believe that biased collection could be responsible. In any event, it is the patterns of variation rather than the absolute values which are of interest and these are incontestable given that all the analyses were carried out by the same person with the same methods.

Industrial activity is suggested by the relatively high frequency of primary flakes, although a higher frequency does occur on plateau gravels. Tertiary waste material, on the other hand, occurs with greater frequency than elsewhere in the survey area, and in significantly higher frequency than that on the plateau gravels. What this suggests is that, in an area where surface flint was available for tool production, more flint was coming in than was going out. This could suggest that either gravel flint was regarded as more

Table 4 Characteristics of lithic assemblages in relation to geology

Geology	Density		% Retouch		% Primary		% Tertiary		% Cores		% Blades		% Scrapers		% c-t	
	Mean	sd	Mean	sd	Mean	sd	Mean	sd	Mean	sd	Mean	sd	Mean	sd	Mean	sd
River gravels n = 48	21.3	13.7	18.8	8.2	12.8	6.2	25.0	7.8	4.2	3.1	8.3	4.4	2.5	2.4	1.6	1.7
Plateau gravels n = 6	19.1	7.0	21.9	11.3	19.8	15.1	22.7	6.4	3.0	2.0	9.3	2.5	6.3	5.4	0.8	1.0
Reading Beds n = 7	16.1	9.1	22.5	5.8	14.4	4.4	27.1	14.0	5.9	3.3	9.0	5.4	2.1	2.3	1.4	2.0
Bagshot Sands n = 4	22.8	7.1	25.4	11.1	14.0	2.2	23.1	6.3	4.5	3.5	8.3	3.1	4.4	4.4	1.8	1.6
Upper chalk n = 6	19.3	8.6	25.8	11.2	16.8	9.8	30.7	12.3	3.8	3.2	9.0	3.8	6.1	4.5	0.0	0.0
Alluvium	44.5		11.2		10.8		7.2		6.7		10.1		2.2		3.4	

Note: Sd = standard deviation n = number of cases (i.e. fields) c-t = core-trimming

suitable than locally available chalk flint for communities settled on the upper chalk or, more likely on the basis of other evidence, that occupation was in the valley, for example on river and plateau gravels, and that local gravel flint was widely used, with chalk flint obtained only as part of an embedded procurement strategy during exploitation of the downland. A third possibility is that this is evidence for some chronological depth in the occupation of the survey area, with the exploitation of chalk flint perhaps earlier in date and associated with short-term downland settlement (explaining the high frequency of retouched artefacts in that area). The gravels by contrast may have been occupied in the later Neolithic or Bronze Age periods, characterised by longer term settlement (or a greater number of settlement episodes) and the exploitation of gravel flint.

On the gravels, which make up some two-thirds of the survey area, variation in artefact collections from the river and plateau gravels is apparent, suggesting that habitat selection was practiced, even at this local scale. For example on the river gravels, 12.8% of the collection was made up of primary flakes and 2.5% of scrapers, contrasting with 19.8% primary flakes and 6.3% scrapers on the plateau gravels. This difference was significant at the 0.01 level, suggesting that plateau gravels were favoured more for the acquisition and primary reduction of flint and for occupation. This contrast may also have a chronological explanation, with less frequent and more ephemeral earlier occupation on the river gravels contrasting with the evidence for more frequent and/or longer-term later Neolithic occupation on the plateau gravels.

In addition to variation within the area of gravels, variability was also apparent among artefact classes within other geological zones. For example, the distribution of tertiary flakes was less uniform in collections from the area of Reading Beds than from plateau gravels. Also of interest is the distribution of cores. This varies across the survey area but displays high variability on the upper chalk where frequency is on the whole lower than most other areas. Locations where cores are more common most likely represent hunting stands or grazing stops, sites occupied for short periods of time, and at which locally derived surface flint nodules were worked.

Soils: Four soil types are evenly distributed within the survey area (Table 5). Two soil types (571j and

Table 5 Characteristics of lithic assemblages in relation to soils

Soil type	Density		% Retouch		% Primary		% Tertiary		% Cores		% Blades		% Scrapers		% c-t	
	Mean	sd	Mean	sd	Mean	sd	Mean	sd	Mean	sd	Mean	sd	Mean	sd	Mean	sd
571g n = 14	17.7	9.6	24.5	8.3	15.8	7.2	29.8	12.8	4.9	3.3	9.2	4.0	3.7	4.0	1.5	2.3
571w n = 18	21.3	11.8	16.9	7.7	11.7	5.5	25.4	6.6	4.7	3.6	8.2	5.3	2.2	2.7	1.3	1.6
581b n = 15	18.2	10.1	22.0	10.0	16.3	10.6	25.2	8.2	2.5	2.0	8.8	3.4	4.5	4.7	1.1	1.4
812a n = 23	22.5	14.3	20.4	9.1	12.7	6.8	23.2	7.5	4.5	2.9	8.6	3.6	2.9	2.0	1.7	1.5
571j n = 1	17.3		33.1		15.8		38.6		5.0		6.6		4.1		0.0	
841b n = 1	39.1		21.9		19.1		18.5		4.8		9.1		4.3		0.6	

Note: sd = standard deviation n = number of cases c-t = core trimming

841b) were represented by only a single field and these results are therefore excluded from the analysis. All soil descriptions derive from Jarvis and Findlay (1984, 14–17).

The density of artefacts varies between the four main soil types, the maximum appearing on 812a ("a shallow calcareous and non-calcareous loamy soil overlying flint gravels") and 571w ("a well-drained coarse loamy and sandy soil mainly over river and plateau gravel drift"). Indeed the difference between these and the remaining two soil types proved significant at the 0.01 level using Analysis of Variance. Of interest is the contrast between the density of artefacts occurring in fields located on 581b and 571w. The soils are broadly similar; the only variation which might affect the scale of occupation being the tendency of 581b towards seasonal waterlogging, although this may not have been the case in the past.

The frequency of retouched items provides a further contrast between 571w, with a lower mean frequency, and 581b where the value is significantly higher. The highest frequency, however, occurs on 571g ("deep well-drained often stoneless coarse loamy and sandy soils") on which the mean value is 3% higher than on other soil types. This high frequency also corresponds with a relatively high coefficient of variation, suggesting the higher frequency is localised. What this means in terms of human behaviour will be discussed further below; however, with lower density than elsewhere and a relatively high frequency of cores and tertiary waste, short-term occupation of an area which appears on the interface of river valley and chalk downland may be the most likely explanation.

Topography: The majority of fields within the survey area lie at a height of below 40 m OD, although the range extends to a height of over 70 m at the north of the survey area (Table 6).

The four fields at a height of over 70 m are all situated on upper chalk and display a low mean density combined with a low coefficient of variation and a high overall frequency of retouched artefacts. The distribution of cores is variable within this zone, while primary flakes display a mean value low in comparison to that from other topographic zones. Not surprisingly, this pattern corresponds closely with that provided by geology to suggest a relationship between some industrial activity occurring on the gravels, and short-term habitation, illustrated by a high frequency of retouched artefacts and low

Table 6 Characteristics of lithic assemblages in relation to topography

	Density		% Retouch		% Primary		% Tertiary		% Cores		% Blades		% Scrapers		% c-t	
Topography	Mean	sd	Mean	sd	Mean	sd	Mean	sd	Mean	sd	Mean	sd	Mean	sd	Mean	sd
<30 m OD n = 29	22.8	14.6	19.0	9.9	12.2	6.3	24.7	8.1	4.5	2.9	8.7	4.8	2.9	2.5	1.6	1.6
31–40 m OD n = 17	20.6	10.2	18.6	5.0	14.4	6.0	22.7	5.0	3.7	3.5	7.2	3.4	2.1	1.6	1.7	1.4
41–50 m OD n = 10	16.1	11.3	24.5	9.3	12.4	5.8	32.6	13.4	4.5	3.3	10.3	3.5	3.8	4.0	1.0	2.0
51–60 m OD n = 9	19.8	8.2	22.9	8.9	18.1	12.2	23.1	5.8	4.2	2.9	8.9	3.0	4.3	5.3	1.7	2.0
61–70 m OD n = 3	21.7	9.3	21.0	11.4	20.1	8.7	27.6	13.4	2.6	1.7	10.5	4.4	3.8	2.0	0.0	0.0
>70 m OD n = 4	11.9	5.5	24.3	9.8	11.7	8.8	27.6	6.0	5.0	3.5	6.1	4.4	5.4	5.5	0.4	0.6

Note: sd = standard deviation n = number of cases (i.e. fields)

overall density, on the terraces and areas of the chalk downland.

In summary, this analysis suggests that prehistoric occupation in the survey area can be described in terms of a coarse-grained adaptive response, as defined in Figure 7. Specifically, short-term and/or occasional occupation appears to have been predominant on the downland and in some adjacent areas such as the steep-sided valley on Bagshot Sands west of the Avon valley, while longer term and/or more regular settlement occurred in the area supporting Reading Beds as well as on some areas of the plateau gravels. Other areas appear to have been used primarily for an extractive purpose, either for hunting and foraging or for the acquisition of flint.

Although some aspects of this pattern are clear, there is also some confusion and "blurring" due largely to the length of time and intensity with which the valley was occupied and the variable use to which individual zones were put. To attempt further clarification, some idea of chronological patterning is required. However, rather than attempting to "find sites" of a specific period, broad patterns are again sought, corresponding to a temporal scale thought appropriate for results of a regional surface collection programme.

The chronological and behavioural dimension.

For the purpose of this analysis, the aim is to explore the spatial arrangement of activities in relation to those places chosen for habitation and exploitation. This owes much to the work of Foley (1981b) and his use of the concept of the "home-range" in investigating the spatial dimension of human behaviour. Although a settlement per se may not be identifiable through surface collection in an area where lithics occur widely, and density is more likely to reflect surface visibility than the scale of occupation, a settlement zone or "home range" (ie. an area where settlement or habitation was the predominant activity) may be easily distinguished by the co-association of distinctive archaeological traits such as artefact type. Furthermore, broad patterning will appear in zones surrounding the home range, reflecting associated activities such as hunting, foraging, and the acquisition of resources such as timber and flint.

The home-range is defined as the area over which communities normally travel in pursuit of their routine activities and includes the area at and immediately surrounding the settlement. A number of archaeological relationships are likely to occur within this area as a direct reflection of the human behaviour which created them. These will include high or low density (depending on the

nature and scale of occupation), a high frequency of maintenance items such as scrapers and other retouched artefacts, and a low frequency of primary flakes and high frequency of cores and tertiary flakes, at least in areas where the home-range and industrial areas are mutually exclusive.

Using the correlation of lithic attributes, broad patterns of correspondence can be identified across the study area as a whole (Tables 7–8 and Figures 16–18). For example, density displays a tendency towards negative correlation with the percentage of retouched artefacts, suggesting that shorter term settlement was predominant (although it is accepted that problems exist in using surface density to represent settlement or land-use intensity; in the survey area, for example, Smith (1985) noted Victorian pottery buried beneath colluvium on a slope of 2 degrees). Additionally, scrapers display a strong positive correlation with retouched artefacts (Table 8) indicating that the two are generally associated. Finally, tertiary flakes display a positive correlation of 0.36 with retouched artefacts and a similar correlation of 0.31 with blades. These latter results suggest that tertiary material, blades and retouched artefacts have a tendency to be found together and may therefore be useful indicators, along with instances of high scraper frequency, of home-range activity, much of which may be of early date.

In terms of specific areas, fields situated on the river terrace west of the Avon in area 2 (Figure 8), support evidence for longer-term or frequent short-term occupation in the form of high mean density, especially in two fields (NGR SU160183 and 162185). Fields in area 1 by contrast display lower density overall but a significantly higher frequency of maintenance tools, twenty-two from one field. This contrast was significant at the 0.01 level and points to area 1 supporting short-term occupation, possibly seasonal, and/or task-specific, and relating to the exploitation of riverine resources (such as those described by Evans 1992). Also of interest in this area is the high frequency of cores and tertiary flakes (Table 7; Figures 12, 14), most of which are chalk- rather than gravel-derived. This is of particular interest in view of the close proximity of gravel-flint and appears to suggest the exploitation of chalk-flint as part of an embedded procurement strategy. It also contradicts the technological arguments, made among others by Arnold et al. (1988, 121), that gravel-flint is of superior quality to chalk-flint and that chalk-flint was avoided during the Mesolithic period, at least on Cranborne Chase (an area, it should be added, where clay-with-flints was available).

The distribution of chronologically diagnostic items provides a further clue. Area 1 contains a large number of scrapers none of which are diagnostically early Neolithic, and two fabricators of late Neolithic date. Area 2 produced two early Neolithic long-end scrapers and one fabricator. Although some of the material from area 1 is believed to be late Mesolithic in date, there is also evidence for a late Neolithic presence.

Area 4 (which contains a combination of Bagshot Sands, Reading Beds and river gravels) presents a confused picture, caused largely by the contrast between collections on Reading Beds and Bagshot Sands (described above). The pattern is one of low overall artefact density (although density is comparatively high on Bagshot Sands) combined with a high frequency of maintenance items (Table 3.6), suggesting the presence of home-ranges occupied for short-periods only, and thus arguably of early (Mesolithic or early Neolithic) date. Again, early and late Neolithic artefacts are present, although the relatively high frequency of blades (Figure 15; Table 7) suggests that Mesolithic or early Neolithic occupation was predominant.

Evidence also survives for home-range activity on the band of plateau gravels in area 5 to the south of the survey area (Table 7). Here high density corresponds with a high frequency of retouched artefacts (Figure 11) and scrapers, at least four of which are diagnostically early Neolithic; nothing of late Neolithic date was found in this area, although evidence for Bronze Age settlement occurs in the form of burnt mounds and scattered finds of pottery (this evidence is described further below). Contrasting with this evidence for settlement in zone 5 is a high mean density from the river gravels in zone 6 but a significantly lower percentage of retouched artefacts and scrapers (Table 7). The frequency of primary waste material is also low in

this area, arguing against its use for industrial activity and primary reduction. The use of this area may be better understood in terms of a secondary home-range, described below, exploited intensively over a long period of time.

In terms of settlement, therefore, the survey results suggest a predominance of small, localised areas of home-range activity. Most of these are believed to represent a series of settlements of temporary and short-term duration occupied perhaps seasonally during the late Mesolithic and early Neolithic periods. There is, however, some evidence for longer-term occupation occurring during the later Neolithic and Bronze Age periods. The areas which supported early occupation were not randomly placed but instead are located centrally to a variety of resource patches. Those in zone 5 and in the valley of Ashford Water and its tributary west of Fordingbridge, are additionally located in sheltered east-facing positions. Zone 5 also produced evidence for later occupation.

Zone 1, on river gravels immediately west of the river Avon, was also described as an area of home-range activity, arguably of Mesolithic and late Neolithic date. The evidence for Mesolithic settlement is based largely on the locational characteristics and the argument that this is a

Table 7 Characteristics of lithic assemblages in relation to ecological zones

Zone	Density		% Retouch		% Primary		% Tertiary		% Cores		% Blades		% Scrapers		% c-t	
	Mean	sd	Mean	sd	Mean	sd	Mean	sd	Mean	sd	Mean	sd	Mean	sd	Mean	sd
1 n = 7	10.2	4.3	22.7	8.2	11.9	5.3	26.7	6.5	7.0	4.1	6.7	3.8	4.4	4.0	2.6	1.7
2 n = 14	26.5	10.7	17.3	6.4	14.7	6.5	22.8	6.1	2.7	2.3	7.9	2.4	1.9	1.0	1.1	1.1
3 n = 6	14.1	6.4	28.6	8.5	15.3	10.1	34.8	6.3	5.3	2.4	8.5	5.4	6.5	4.4	0.2	0.5
4 n = 13	14.1	7.5	22.9	3.9	14.1	7.5	28.4	13.2	4.5	3.2	9.7	4.1	2.2	2.5	1.4	2.3
5 n = 20	21.8	10.2	23.3	9.8	15.8	9.4	22.6	7.7	3.9	2.5	8.6	3.0	4.5	3.9	1.7	1.6
6 n = 12	26.4	17.3	11.8	7.5	9.6	3.1	24.5	5.7	4.2	3.2	9.0	6.4	1.4	1.5	1.2	1.4

Note: sd = standard deviation n = number of cases (i.e. fields) c-t = core-trimming

Table 8 Matrix of Pearson correlation coefficients between different lithic types

	Flint	% Retouch	% Primary	% Tertiary	% Cores	% Blades	% Scrapers	%Coretrimmer
Flint	1.00							
% Retouch	–0.27	1.00						
% Primary	–0.13	0.21	1.00					
% Tertiary	–0.30	0.36	0.09	1.00				
% Cores	–0.14	0.03	–0.15	0.14	1.00			
% Blades	0.03	0.05	0.15	0.31	–0.02	1.00		
% Scrapers	–0.13	0.66	0.16	0.20	0.006	0.04	1.00	
% Coretrimmer	0.07	–0.08	–0.12	–0.34	0.16	–0.20	–0.23	1.00

spot more likely to be favoured for extractive behaviour than occupation. Also there is the point that chalk flint is more common here than might be expected, a point made earlier and which may relate to the embedded exploitation of downland from a valley base.

Finally, in zone 2, and specifically the area comprising two fields immediately north of Breamore, where river gravels border the alluvium west of the Avon, density is higher than anywhere else in the survey area. The percentage of retouched artefacts is remarkably consistent between the two fields (18.2 and 18.3%) but lower than that from many other fields, while the percentage of primary flakes is relatively high. Although scrapers are not common, those that do occur are early Neolithic in date (with the exception of one Bronze Age thumbnail scraper); a single late Neolithic artefact was also present.

The point has been made that, in a number of areas, late Mesolithic and later Neolithic material have been found together. This is a point made also by Barrett *et al* (1991, 62) and others, for whom a common theme appears to be the tight clustering of Mesolithic material within a much wider distribution of later artefacts. Barrett *et al* (1991) make the point that this relationship is, "so striking that . . . we might envisage the reuse of particularly favourable areas which had experienced a phase of clearance and partial regeneration".

Beyond the home-ranges lie what Foley described as the secondary home-range, an area where specific tasks were repeated consistently over a period of time and within a certain radius. Evidence for this area occurs largely in zones 4 (during the late Mesolithic at least) and 6 where extractive and industrial activity, variously associated with plateau and terrace settlement, survives in the form of localised concentrations of primary flakes and cores. The extra home-range has been defined by Rogers and Black (1976, 22) as an area which provides "back-up insurance" supporting the population of a home-range when yields are low. This will appear as the occasional find of extractive tool types such as axes and arrowheads, possibly in addition to burial and other ceremonial monuments in the later periods. In this area such evidence appears to focus on neighbouring downland, the coastal plain, and the New Forest. Evidence for the prehistoric exploitation of Cranborne Chase has recently been published (Barrett, Bradley and Green 1991; Arnold *et al* 1988) and provides a valuable contrast with the Avon Valley (see below). Evidence from the coastal plain is described by Calkin (1951).

Interpretation

In this section the results described above are placed in the context of prior knowledge of past communities, both within the survey area and its environs. For convenience this information is presented by period beginning with the late Mesolithic. Nothing diagnostically of early Mesolithic date was recovered from the survey.

Late Mesolithic

Prior to the survey described in this report, the only evidence for Mesolithic activity in the area was in the form of a few stray finds and two excavated sites: an occupation site at Downton (Higgs 1959), interpreted by Smith (1985, 82) as a long-term base camp with an abundance of "woodworking tools", and a focus of hilltop activity at Whitsbury Castle Ditches (Ellison and Rahtz 1987). The survey itself has added little to this in terms of diagnostic artefacts, although the distribution of fields with high blade frequencies does provide some evidence for early settlement. This contrasts with the evidence from areas of the neighbouring upland of Cranborne Chase and the sands and clays of the New Forest where lithic scatters and a greater frequency of diagnostic stray finds have been recorded. However, rather than seeing these two sets of data as representing individual adaptations to two discrete geographical areas, the evidence appears to suggest two parts of a single system which can be explained in part with reference to Mellars' (1976) system of site categorisation.

On the chalk uplands of Cranborne Chase, Arnold *et al* (1988, 118) have identified concentrations of Mesolithic material on clay-with-flints, with other groups on greensands and in the valleys, some of which are tributaries to the Avon. Of Mellars' four groups of industries,

chalkland sites correspond to Group B ("industries usually with 30–60% microliths, 25–50% scrapers, few burins, but some axes and occasionally saws"), greensand sites to Group A ("high percentage of microliths, low percentage of scrapers") and two of the chalkland sites fall into Mellars' subgroup B1 ("70–85% microliths, 14–22% scrapers"). Group C sites ("82–90% scrapers") are not present in the Cranborne Chase survey area. In the Avon valley the opposite may be true; very few microliths have been recovered from the area (possibly because of problems with visibility and collection bias) and the assemblages which are of early date are dominated by scrapers, some of which, it can reasonably be assumed, are late Mesolithic.

This clear distinction between the relative distributions of extractive tool types and maintenance items suggests not only a functional division in the distribution of human behaviour during the Mesolithic, but also that this division remained throughout the periods of the Mesolithic in which the area was occupied (the "continuity = accumulation" point, made earlier). This point was also noted by Smith (1985, 114) in his interpretation of results from the Kennet valley, Berkshire, where the distributions of cores/scrapers and axes/microliths were mutually exclusive. As for the local pattern of settlement, alluviation and colluviation may have masked much of the early settlement, at least on and close to the valley floor (see above). Some early sites can, however, be identified which, together with Downton, may suggest a density perhaps similar to that identified by Froom in the Kennet Valley, where fifty sites were recognised along 6 kilometres of river frontage (1972).

Neolithic

The downland landscape which adjoins the survey area to the north and west has been the subject of considerable archaeological research over many years. Excavations by Pitt Rivers at various sites on Cranborne Chase are well known, while the history of investigative fieldwork in the Stonehenge area dates back to the early nineteenth century and the work of Colt-Hoare and Cunnington. In short, the Avon valley survey area has a central place (geographically-speaking) within the Wessex landscape, and lies in close proximity to the core areas or "monument zones" of Cranborne Chase and Stonehenge.

Evidence for settlement prior to the survey's implementation comprises a few stray finds (including a jadeite axe from Breamore) and the excavated site at Downton (Rahtz 1962), where settlement occurred in the Mesolithic, Neolithic and Early Bronze Age. Excavation at Downton revealed occupation debris scattered over an area of 2000 sq.m, with discrete clusters of Ebbsfleet and Mortlake pottery contained within pits and hollows. ApSimon (1962) suggested that the nature of the settlement supported the evidence provided by ceramics, implying a semi-permanent and small-scale occupation. Activity in the valley was apparently intense, however, with alluviation involving the redeposition of a clay/gravel deposit such as might occur through the clearance, erosion or reworking of river terraces (Smith 1985,174). Smith also notes that, prior to occupation in the middle Neolithic, the erosion product changed to a fine, buff-coloured sandy silt, possibly representing clearance of the chalk in the early Neolithic.

Although a few arrowheads were recovered from the survey, a far greater number were found on Cranborne Chase (Barrett *et al* 1991, 31) and in particular on the coastal plain around Bournemouth (Barrett *et al*, 33). As was suggested above, this distribution, and the variable frequency with which arrowheads are often found, can be explained using the home-range model. Settlement areas were predominantly in the valleys; arrowheads are an extractive artefact and were used not on and immediately around settlements but in the secondary and extra home-ranges, in this case largely on the uplands of Cranborne Chase and in the New Forest. With the benefit of river transport, even the coastal plain would have been within easy reach from a home-base in the survey area. The same case can be made elsewhere: Bradley and Ellison, for example, suggest that leaf-shaped arrowheads were common on the Berkshire Downs but not in the Lambourn Valley (1975,190), while Richards (1990,265) draws similar conclusions for earlier Neolithic exploitation around Stonehenge: "Some investment in extensive clearance can be

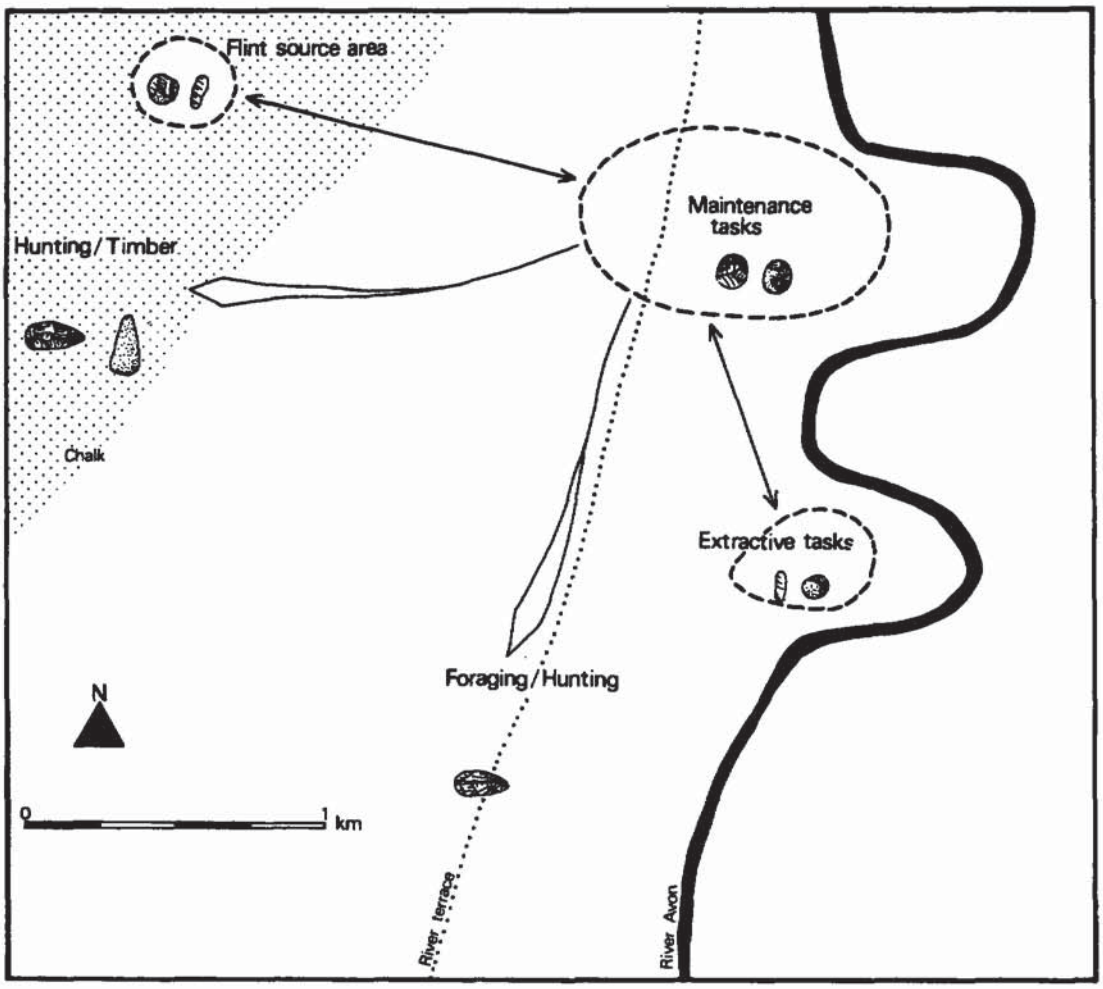

Fig 19. Schematic map of the distribution of activities in the northern part of the survey area

demonstrated . . . perhaps representing the creation and maintenance of a base area from which more mobile and sporadic exploitation of the chalk to the east was carried out". By combining previously recorded findspots with the results of recent surface collection, this argument can also be made for the Meon Valley (Schofield forthcoming). This model, as it applies to areas 1 and 2 of the survey area (Figure 8) is illustrated in Figure 19.

Some understanding of the evidence from the adjacent downland of Cranborne Chase is relevant here. In the earlier Neolithic, Barrett *et al* (1991, 34) suggest that molluscan analyses in the survey area indicate small-scale activity within restricted catchment areas. They also argue, while accepting the frequent problems encountered with identifying earlier Neolithic evidence through surface collection, that full-scale settlement of the chalkland in this area started extremely slowly. With the later Neolithic the scale of activity increased, transverse arrowheads

outnumbering leaf-shaped arrowheads by three to one. They also suggest that, "the political geography of the earlier Neolithic retained its hold over the population, and it seems possible that it was through activities in and around (the Dorset Cursus) that the continuity of society was maintained. The focusing of so much activity on the Cursus complex went on long after its earthworks were in disrepair and left behind it a series of striking manifestations in the archaeological record" (Barrett *et al* 1991, 106).

In summary, the evidence from the survey suggests occupation throughout the Neolithic period predominantly in the form of short-term events, possibly involving the re-use of favoured areas over many years by communities who were to some degree nomadic (see Barrett 1994 for an outline of the general argument that the first settled communities were Bronze Age in date; see also Crosby 1990). Evidence points to the valley sides being exploited, probably for arable cultivation, with the neighbouring uplands providing the back-up resources, including upland grazing, in addition to acting as an associated "monument zone". The continuation of settlement throughout the Neolithic is of interest here as it contrasts with the situation in the upper Meon Valley, east Hampshire, where a hiatus apparently occurred at the end of the early Neolithic, with evidence for occupation appearing again with the Bronze Age. One suggestion for this may be the increased attraction or hold of what may be termed "emergent landscapes", areas such as Cranborne Chase which became fashionable or politically attractive, and from which the dispersed population involved in late Neolithic monument building was derived (Shennan 1986, 144).

Bronze Age

Much of the evidence for Bronze Age activity survives in the form of round barrows which are concentrated in areas to the east and west of the survey area. Within the survey area a few barrows/ring ditches are sited on the river terrace to the south (see Figure 21 and Davies and Graham 1984); diagnostic Bronze Age artefacts are, however, uncommon both from the survey and from previous records. Although not a diagnostic feature of Bronze Age technology, the distribution of fields containing low blade frequencies tends to concentrate in the south of the survey area (Figure 15). This corresponds with the location of some of the Bronze Age pottery sherds, round barrows (Figure 21), and concentrations of burnt flint (Figure 20) which have been attributed a Bronze Age (see below) or Late Bronze Age/Iron Age date (Smith 1985, 415). Finally, although collection units which contain a high frequency of hinge-fractured flakes are widespread, one of the highest single concentrations does correspond with this area.

Another clue to the nature of Bronze Age settlement in the survey area can be derived from a general understanding of Deverel-Rimbury pottery, sherds of which were recovered during the survey (including the excavation at Harbridge) and a general study of which has been attempted for Cranborne Chase (Barrett *et al* 1978). Two sherds recovered by surface collection at Harbridge came from heavily tempered bucket urn(s). This is a type defined by Ellison (1980) as representing heavy-duty wares used for general domestic tasks. On Cranborne Chase, Barrett *et al* (1978) suggest that such pottery was being locally produced and possibly transported, either as a raw material or finished product, between settlements. This, they suggest, points to small-scale and essentially localised activity during the Middle Bronze Age. Indeed, as Bradley has observed (1984, 106), in contrast to other areas of the country, and having dominated the settlement pattern for much of the second millennium BC, Wessex in the Middle Bronze Age becomes a rather marginal area with occupation sites showing less variety than, for example, in the Thames valley.

The evidence from lithics recovered by surface collection, combined with that discussed below, appears to suggest Bronze Age occupation along the valley corridor but with a concentration on the terraces to the south, particularly on the west side of the river from which the downland could be visited and exploited. It should be added, however, that the distribution of barrows in the New Forest (Gerrard 1993), together with the

Fig 20. The distribution of burnt flint and burnt mounds in the survey area

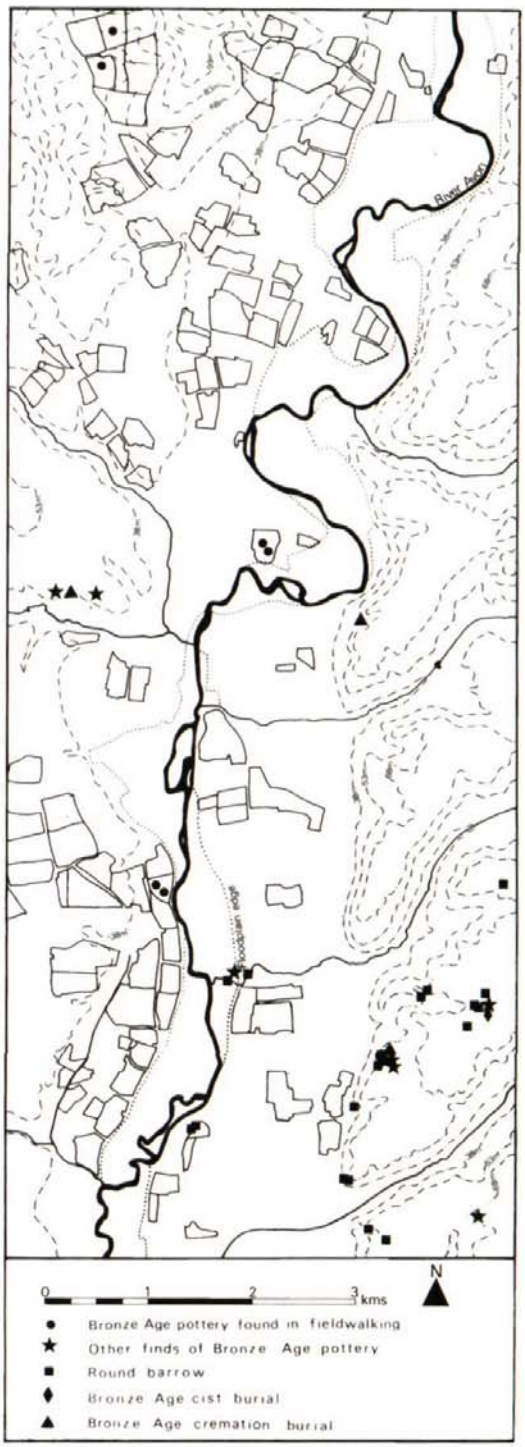

Fig 21. The distribution of Bronze Age pottery and monuments in the survey area

number of burnt mounds in this area (Passmore and Pallister 1967 and see below), suggests that this too was important and should perhaps be seen in the context of the extra home-range described above.

Lithic artefacts recovered as part of the Avon Valley survey therefore most likely represent occupation of the valley during the Middle Bronze Age, by pastoral communities visiting the area regularly but for relatively short periods. The possible spatial arrangement of such groups within the valley may be described as a "linear stream pattern". A similar case, which, as with the Avon Valley, is based largely on burnt flint distributions, has been argued for the River Iwerne in Dorset (Smith 1985,230).

BURNT MOUNDS AND OTHER EVIDENCE OF BRONZE AGE SETTLEMENT

The previous section has outlined the broad patterns in the evidence for the earlier prehistoric periods, based in particular on the distribution of lithic artefacts and debitage, as well as pottery and monuments. In the context of the Bronze Age reference has also been made to the burnt mounds which occur in the survey area. In this section these are given a closer examination.

Burnt mounds – heaps of fire-cracked stones often forming a kidney shape around a trough – are a very widely distributed form of monument throughout the British Isles and elsewhere and have been the object of much recent attention (see Buckley 1990, Hodder and Barfield 1991). Many are known from the New Forest (Pasmore and Pallister 1967) and those falling within the survey area are shown in Figure 20. However, the fieldwalking carried out for the survey revealed a number of burnt mounds within the Avon Valley itself (Figure 20), suggesting that the New Forest concentration is a function of the lack of arable agriculture which would have levelled such mounds, of the restriction of Pasmore and Pallister's survey to the area of the Forest, or a combination of the two.

The Avon Valley mounds are concentrated in the south of the survey area on the river terrace, in the position typical of such sites by the side of small streams, which in at least one case no longer run or have been converted into drainage ditches. In 1984–85 one of these mounds, at North End Farm, Harbridge, was excavated and produced sherds of Deverel-Rimbury pottery, thus confirming the standard view that such sites generally date to some period in the middle part of the Bronze Age. This impression has also been confirmed by recent programmes of radiocarbon-dating (see papers in Buckley 1990, Barfield and Hodder 1991). However, it is important to qualify this statement. As Barber (1990a, b) has shown for Scotland, there is a great variety of situations in which burnt stone is found on archaeological sites, ranging from cases where we are clearly dealing with deposits of burnt stone and troughs found within undoubted settlements, to those where the burnt mound with its trough is a more or less isolated feature. The former are not chronologically restricted but the latter are.

The burnt mounds of the Avon Valley appear to be of the latter type, and this is certainly true of the one excavated at Harbridge. There were several other mounds along its small stream but no other indications of settlement were found by the fieldwalking. The Harbridge site was also typical in that it largely lacked evidence of normal settlement activities. There was virtually no pottery, no animal bone despite a neutral soil pH value in at least some parts of the site, no carbonized seed remains among all the charcoal from the site, and no indication of standard settlement features of the type well-known from excavated settlements of the period. Phosphate analysis of the site and the area around it also produced low readings. Finally, the subsoil of both the site itself and the immediately surrounding area was poorly drained clay.

In all these ways then the site corresponded to the characteristic pattern of negative evidence, with the consequence that here too excavation could throw remarkably little light on site function. Although the traditional view that they were cooking places has recently been challenged (Barfield and Hodder 1987), more recent discussions (in Buckley 1990) tend to come out against the hypothesis that they were sweat baths, or point out, on the basis of written sources, that

there need not have been any conflict between the two activities. Despite the lack of evidence, however, it may be worth adding our own speculations.

The fact that the *isolated* burnt mounds appear to be restricted in date to a single period suggests either that the function they served was itself restricted to that period, or alternatively that, at other times, it was carried out by different means. Cooking in the Bronze Age was largely carried out in cooking pots and in this respect the almost aceramic nature of most burnt mound sites may be significant. Most pottery of this period, with its heavy fabrics and large vessels, would not have been suitable for a mobile existence. However, given the generally very low proportions of wild animals in Bronze Age faunal assemblages and the wide prevalence of burnt mounds in the landscape, the idea that they are connected with hunting, the traditional view, does not seem especially convincing. Much more plausible is the idea that they are associated with pastoral activities, with the seasonal movement of flocks and herds through the landscape, not least for the purpose of making use of the early grazing provided by low-lying stream and river valleys. Discussions of the 'Wessex culture' and other such Bronze Age phenomena have often emphasized the importance of the pastoral element in subsistence during this period: the burnt mounds may provide the missing element in the settlement pattern. For those communities or parts of communities mobile at particular times of the year, the answer to the impracticability of pottery was the setting up of troughs along streams at which they would camp. The mounds would grow in the course of successive possibly very short visits and every so often particular troughs would be abandoned and new ones constructed near by as the focus for new campsites. Reasons for the abandonment of the system can also be postulated, including changes in pottery technology which led to the mobile use of pottery becoming a more practical proposition, or the gradual re-organization of the landscape on a more territorial basis restricting earlier mobility. There is certainly evidence of the latter in the later Bronze Age of southern England, and the former has never been investigated.

Recent work on the southern British Neolithic and Bronze Age has begun to emphasize the contrast between the settled agriculture and expanding field systems of the later Bronze Age and early Iron Age and more mobile forms of subsistence which preceded them. The burnt mounds and the Bronze Age lithic distribution patterns discussed above may well fit in with these relatively mobile patterns, but even if the mounds in the Avon Valley and surrounding areas date to a period when the landscape was beginning to be organized on a more territorial basis, this does not preclude the validity of the interpretation suggested above.

However, as many of the contributors to the recent burnt mound volumes have emphasized, not all occurrences of burnt flint imply the presence of such mounds and their associated troughs. Burnt flint can be produced by a variety of processes which are not chronologically specific. Figure 20 shows a number of fields in the northern part of the survey area with high densities of burnt flint. It may be that at least some of these represent burnt mounds which have been levelled and spread but this is now impossible to say. None of the distributions of dateable pottery appear to correlate with them in any discernible way.

IRON AGE, ROMAN AND PAGAN SAXON DISTRIBUTION PATTERNS

The Iron Age

It has been clear for some time that in southern England at least fieldwalking is not an especially satisfactory method of identifying traces of Iron Age settlement because of the nature of the evidence. The indestructible lithics of earlier periods are no longer being used, or at least not to any great extent, while the pottery is relatively soft and friable and thus does not survive particularly well in the ploughsoil; the contrast with the succeeding Romano-British pottery is particularly marked. However, as a corollary to this, it seems reasonable to regard any finds of

Iron Age pottery as an indicator of actual settlement.

The distribution of early to middle Iron Age pottery is shown in Figure 22. Interestingly enough, it can be seen that two out of the three fields with Bronze Age pottery have early Iron Age nearby, suggesting some degree of continuity of occupation.

Altogether 23 sherds of this period were found, of which 9 came from two fields in the north of the area on the chalk, the remainder being spread evenly throughout the valley and its terraces. Of the two fields in the north, one contained 5 sherds, two dating to the 8th–7th centuries BC, including a piece of a haematite coated furrowed bowl; the other 3 sherds probably date to the 8th–4th century BC. This field also contained a Romano-British site. Another field about 700 m to the north-west, on a south-west facing slope, produced 4 sherds of similar date. There was no clear indication of the exact location of the occupation site, however, as the sherds were spread across the whole width of the field, at the top and bottom of the slope.

Two fields in the valley zone at the northern end of the survey area also produced sherds of similar date; again one of the fields was adjacent to a Romano-British occupation site. In addition to the northern group of finds there is also a suggestion of another group on the Avon terrace in the south-west of the survey area around Harbridge; again, one of these sherd groups is in the same location as Romano-British site.

Despite the relatively small number of sherds, it is clear that there was widespread early Iron Age occupation of this part of the Avon Valley, including the valley itself as well as the chalk. There are also signs of continuity from the early Iron Age into the subsequent Romano-British period. Even if we cannot assume actual continuity of occupation, there are signs of continuing preferences for similar locations, presumably pointing to similar agricultural strategies. This accords with evidence from other surveys (e.g. Shennan 1985) and with the argument made by Bradley (1978) and noted above, that it was only in the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age that fixed agricultural systems became fully established. These involved the long-term occupation of particular places, which become archaeologically more visible as a result of such features as ditches and storage pits, and the expansion of arable field systems in suitable areas. It is apparent from numerous studies of colluviation which have been carried out that these areas initially included much of the chalklands but that this new agricultural onslaught led in many areas to major erosion and resultant impoverishment. The valley gravel areas, on the other hand, agriculturally important from the beginning of these developments, became if anything more important as time went on.

On the western edge of the New Forest, within the survey area, are three small, presumptively Iron Age, hillforts (Figure 22), but very little is known about them and their significance is impossible to evaluate. They may represent centres of local political control over sections of the valley and their population.

The Romano-British evidence

The fieldwalking programme considerably increased knowledge of Romano-British settlement patterns within the Avon Valley. Previously only three sites were known (see Figure 23): a late 3rd century kiln site of New Forest type at Allen's Farm, Rockbourne, in the north-western part of the survey area (Light 1983: 69–75); the 'industrial' settlement at Armsley near Godshill, opposite the Allen's Farm kiln site on the other side of the valley, on the edge of the New Forest (Edwardes 1927; Musty 1969); and finally a settlement in a promontory situation at Gorley Hill, also on the edge of the Forest, with a possible 1st century AD kiln. In addition there are a number of records of stray finds of pottery and coins from the vicinity of the river crossing at Fordingbridge, and a few from elsewhere.

Of the 124 fields walked, only 39 did not contain Romano-British pottery and the majority of these were on marginal land, some in areas which do not seem to have been ploughed before the present century. There was a general tendency for sherd densities to decrease away

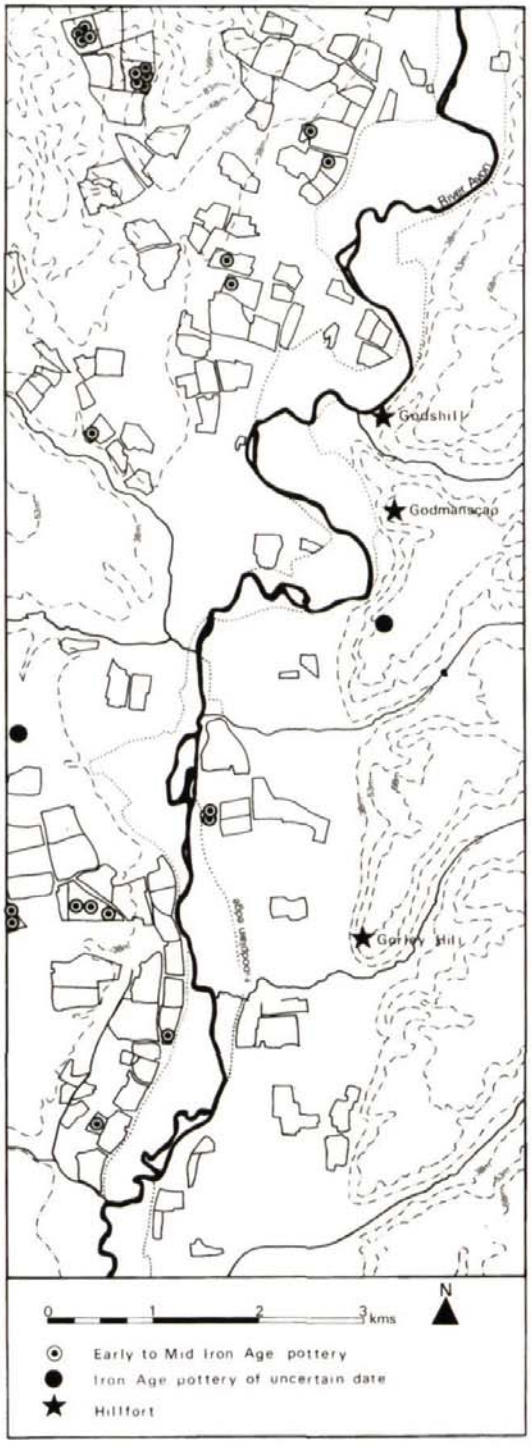

Fig 22. The distribution of Early to Mid Iron Age pottery and monuments in the survey area

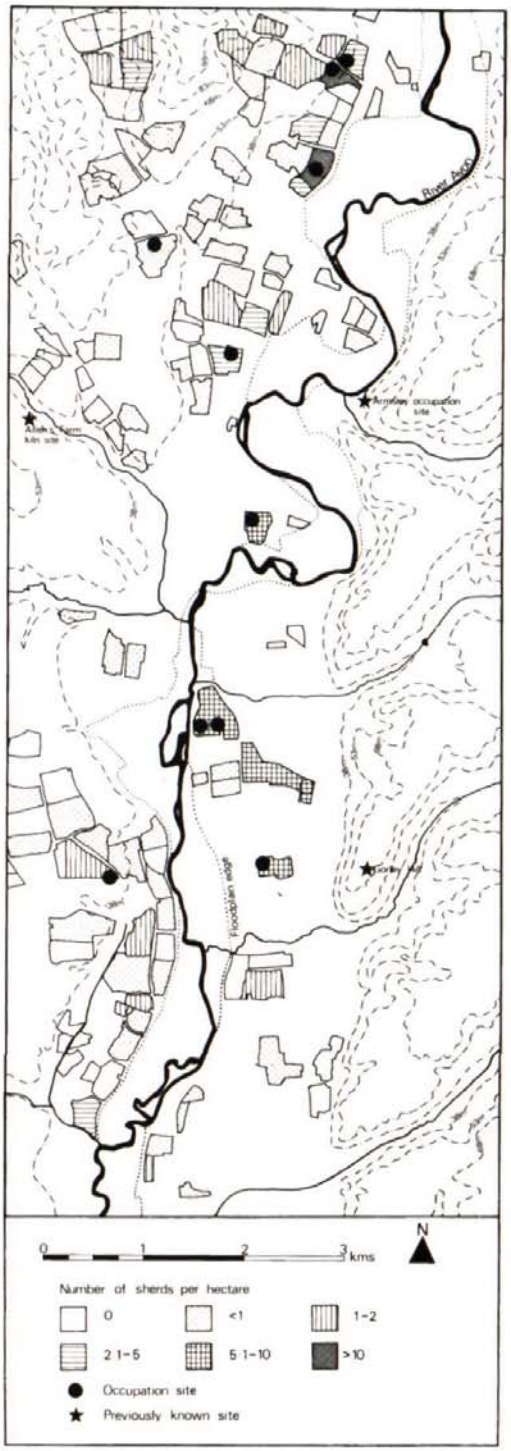

Fig 23. The distribution of Romano-British pottery in the survey area

from the habitation sites and for areas which are likely to have been near the boundaries between Romano-British farms to produce little or no pottery; up to fifteen of the 'blank' fields may have come into this category. Frequently, sherd scatters were separated by barren areas, which may indicate pasture or woodland between the arable fields.

Ten previously unknown occupation sites were located, of which six were on the valley floor, on the lowest terrace, three on the gravels of the higher valley terraces and one on the chalk. The suggestion of more of an emphasis on the valley than in the early to middle Iron Age may be a result of the erosion processes to which reference has already been made. As a result of these there would now have been a contrast in agricultural potential between the valley terraces and the slopes on either side which had not previously existed. In any event, the fieldwalking results make it clear that the whole valley area was densely settled in the Roman period, with what are likely to have been relatively small mixed farms and villages existing in close proximity to one another wherever there was suitable land. If one assumes that the finds of Romano-British pottery not in dense enough concentrations to be considered occupation sites represent a manuring scatter resulting from the deposition of household waste on the fields, then the extent of the area in arable cultivation for at least some of the time is very considerable indeed.

However, it is a mistake to think that this pattern of dense occupation was actually Roman in origin. The similarity between the earlier Iron Age pattern and the Roman period one has already been noted, but more directly to the point, all the Romano-British sites without exception also produced pottery of the later Iron Age. It thus appears that in this area of the country the Roman occupation did not make much difference to rural settlement, at least for some considerable time. A new agricultural pattern had emerged during the later Iron Age, perhaps in response to the erosion noted above, which simply continued into the Roman period, and little changed except the pottery. This appears to be a specific instance of a widespread pattern in southern England, noted by Crosby (1990). If quantity of sherds is a guide, then all the occupation sites were at their peak during the first two centuries AD and none seem to have changed their original 'native' character as there was a total absence of contemporary tile and other building material. Of course, this again makes the point of the lack of Roman influence in the area, at least during the first two centuries.

The late Iron Age and Romano-British pottery from the fieldwalking survey was generally more consistent with that from the New Forest (e.g. Church Green, Eyeworth, Allin 1977; Pasmore and Fortescue 1978; Fortescue 1980, 1982) and from other parts of Hampshire than with that from Dorset; there were very few examples of black-burnished ware. Almost all the early fabrics were heavily grog-tempered, while over 95% of the pottery was from cooking and storage vessels. A few sherds of Samian were the only early fine wares, with several examples of Oxfordshire fabrics among the normal New Forest late 3rd and 4th century types, and one Alice Holt storage jar from Harbridge. However, the late 3rd and 4th century wares were relatively few in number. At one of the sites in Breamore parish in the northern part of the survey area perhaps 20% of the sherds were of this date, including 5% of fine wares, but elsewhere the percentage was much lower. This is surprising in view of the close proximity of the New Forest kilns and also more generally, since the 3rd and 4th centuries generally appear to be periods of rural prosperity. It may perhaps be connected with the continued expansion and apparently increasing wealth of the villa at Rockbourne (RCHM(E) 1983), which began life as a late Iron Age settlement and continued and expanded up to the 4th century AD.

It is not impossible, although of course extremely difficult to verify, that over time the estate associated with the Rockbourne villa increased in size and came to include much of the survey area. This may have led to a gradual centralization of occupation and thus the disappearance of some earlier settlements, or alternatively to a gradual impoverishment of the local population as local surpluses came to be controlled by the villa.

The sub-Roman/Pagan Saxon evidence

One of the most significant aspects of the whole survey was its recovery of evidence for early Saxon occupation, in the form of sherds of chaff-tempered pottery (Figure 24), which showed strong continuity with the preceding Romano-British settlement pattern. During the normal line-walking 27 sherds of chaff-tempered pottery were found, including 17 from Bickton, site 1, and 4 from Charford. Initially the site at North Street, Breamore, produced 3 sherds, one from each of the fields involved, but subsequently, during grid-walking and further searching, more than 30 others were discovered. Two similar sherds came from the Romano-British site at Burgate and two more from Harbridge, including one from the 'burnt mound' excavation site. In fact, virtually all the chaff-tempered pottery comes from on or close to pre-existing Romano-British sites. Even if this cannot be taken as definite evidence of continuity of population or of property, it is certainly indicative of a similar agricultural system and land-use pattern. Just as the beginning of the Roman period was not especially significant from the point of the agricultural organization of the Avon Valley – it continued patterns established in the later Iron Age – so may its end have been similarly insignificant for rural populations.

Romano-British occupation sites in the Avon Valley

This outline of the Roman period will be completed by a brief description of the individual occupation sites investigated by fieldwalking.

Bickton

The area around the village of Bickton lies in the centre of the survey area adjacent to the Avon, on its eastern side. It has extensive traces of Romano-British occupation (see Figure 25). Immediately north of the medieval and present-day village, on the edge of the terrace overlooking the river, is a large pottery scatter of about 6 ha., with material ranging in date from the late Iron Age to 6th century chaff-tempered wares. A smaller detached scatter about 100 m

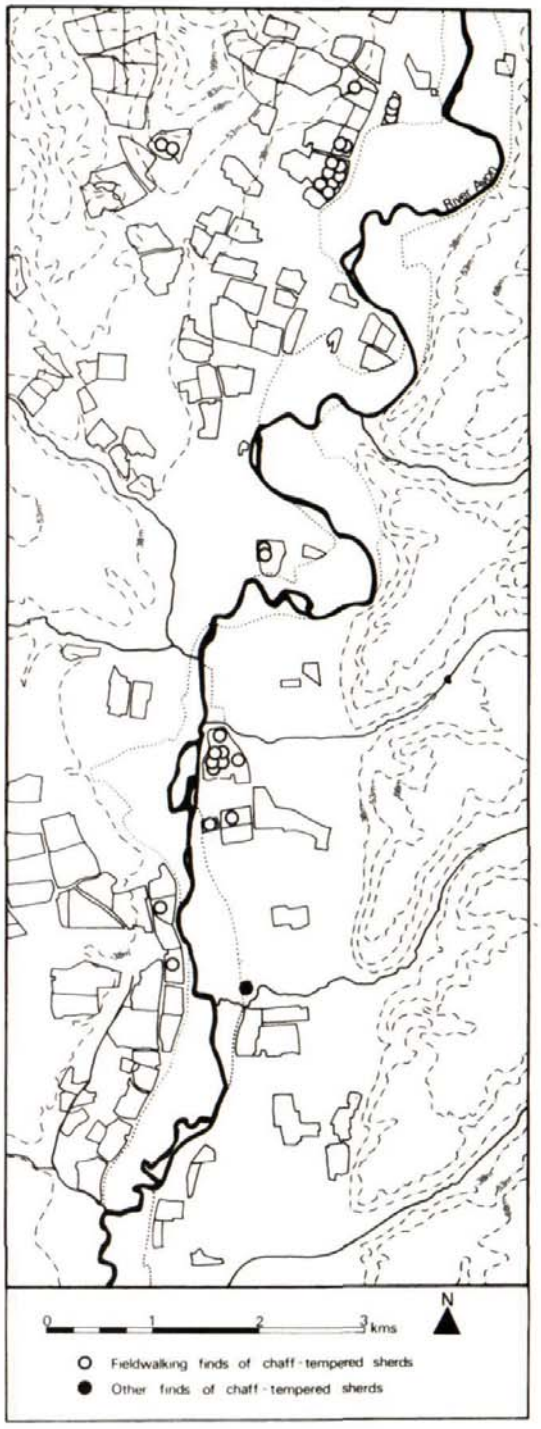

Fig 24. The distribution of chaff-tempered ware in the survey area

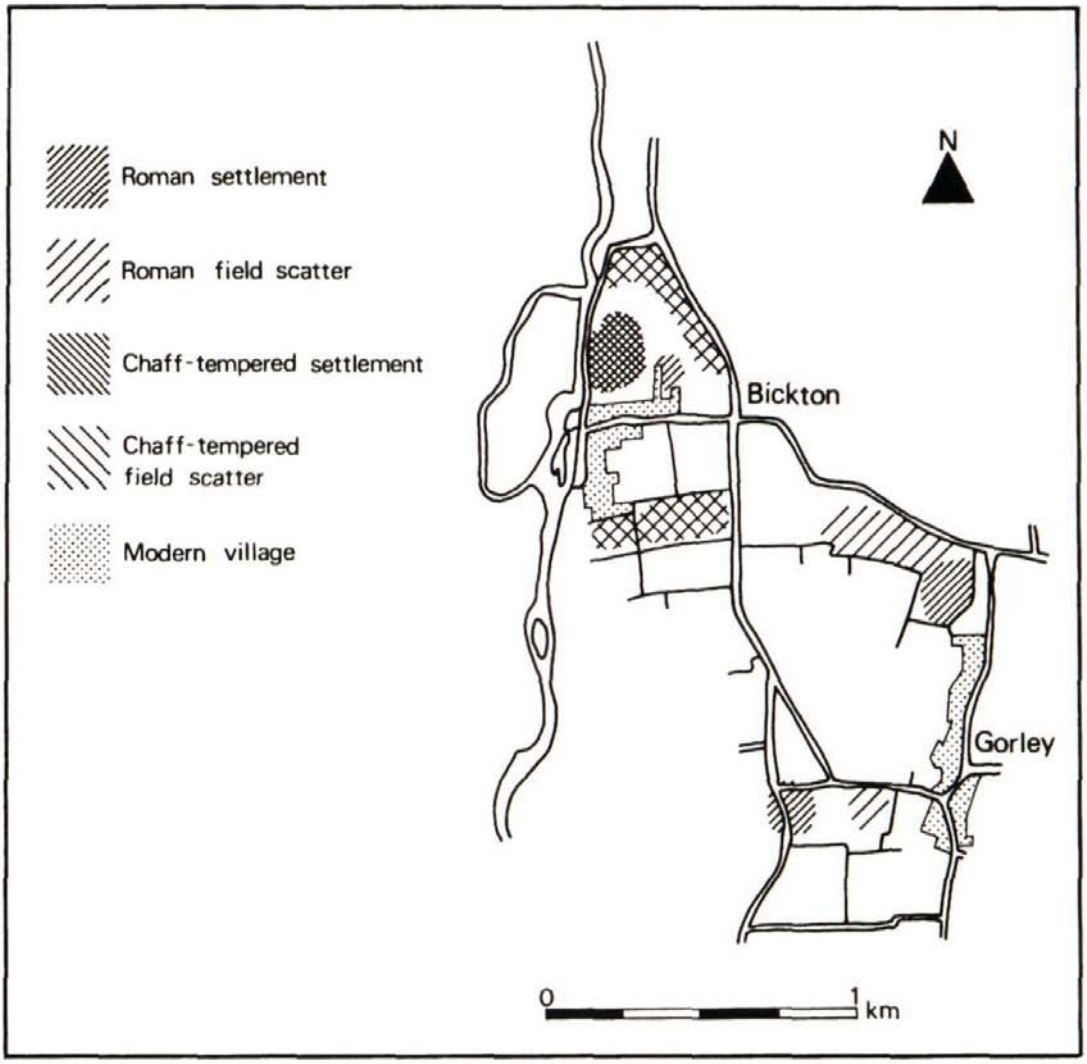

Fig 25. Evidence for Romano-British occupation at Bickton

to the south-east was about 1 ha. in size and contained a large quantity of Romano-British material but none with chaff-tempering. Taken together the two scatters are roughly equivalent in area to the present day village of Bickton. As the map (Figure 25) shows, within the same field as this site, on the northern and eastern edges of the field, was a distinct 'manuring scatter' containing both Romano-British and chaff-tempered pottery, while about 500 m to the south, on the other side of the present day village was a similar thin scatter. It seems plausible to think of this as representing some idea of the extent and location of the intensively used arable of the Romano-British village, and indeed it corresponds rather well to the usual

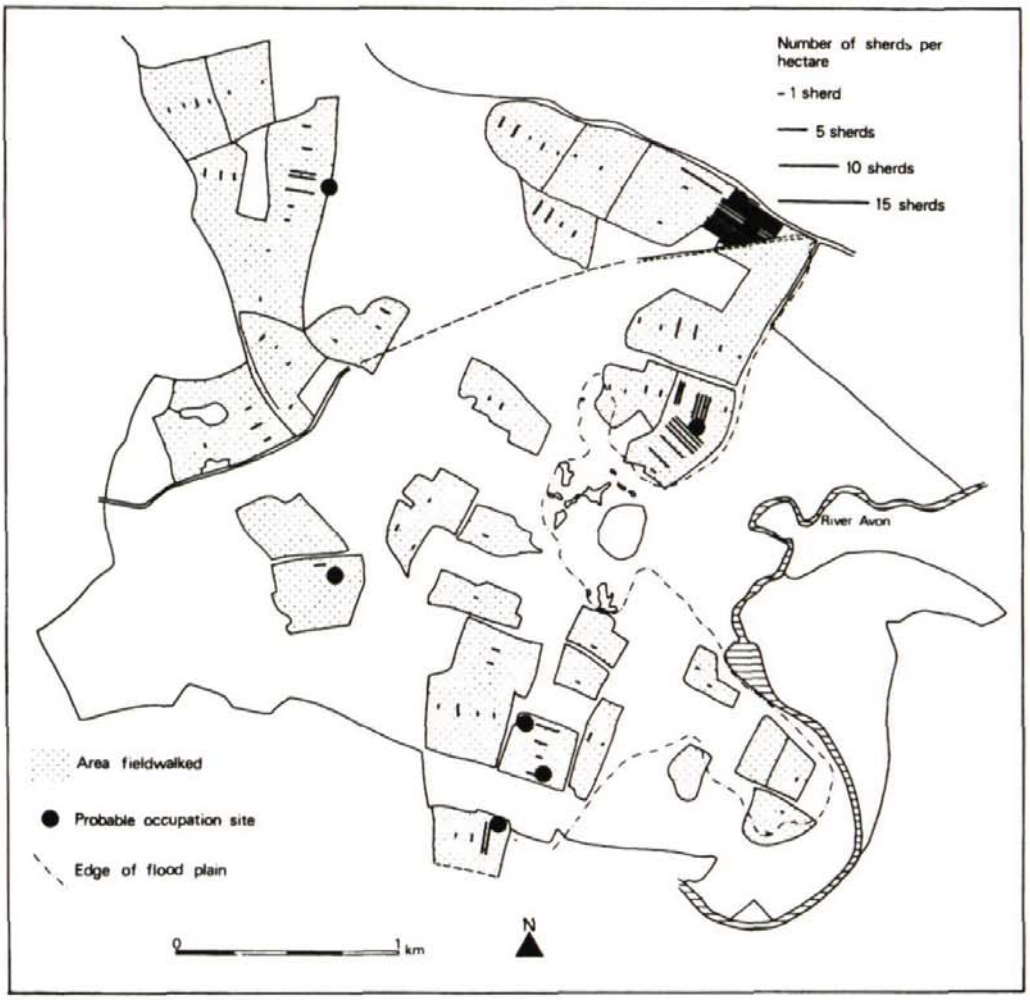

Fig 26. Distribution of Romano-British pottery at Breamore

assumptions of the technique of site catchment analysis (Higgs 1972, 1975; Vita-Finzi and Higgs 1970) as to how large village agricultural territories would have been.

About a kilometre south-east of this settlement was another substantial site of about 5–6 ha., but with no pottery dating later than the 4th century. This too has a field scatter associated with it, on its western side (Figure 25). The same is true of the occupation site at Gorley, about three-quarters of a kilometre to the south-west of the above location. This is rather smaller than the other sites, about 4 ha., and there is a small field scatter to its east.

It seems plausible to suggest that further research in this area might help to indicate the approximate boundaries of at least the intensively farmed parts of the lands belonging to the different settlements and thus give an indication of the size of each holding.

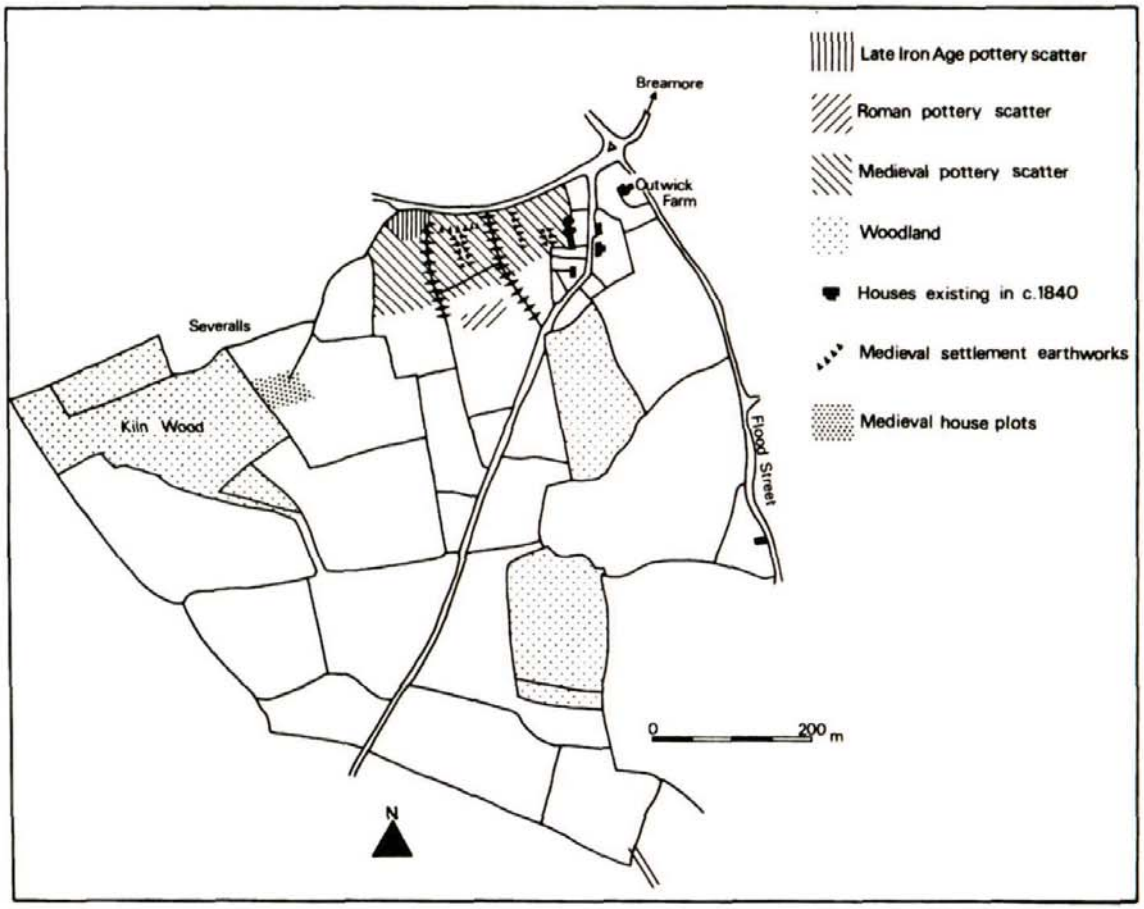

Fig 27. Evidence for occupation at Outwick

Breamore

The modern parish of Breamore contains five Romano-British settlements found in the course of the field survey (Figure 26).

i) This is situated at the western edge of Breamore Wood on a gentle west-facing chalk slope, with much of the site apparently lying beyond the present arable in the wood itself. As noted above, pottery of about 8th century BC date was found here, as well as Romano-British pottery up to 4th century AD in date.

ii) At Outwick, about 150 m south-west of the existing hamlet, on a gravel terrace, was a small pottery scatter of only about 0.25 ha. (Figure 27) It contained pottery dating from the late Iron Age to the 4th century AD, but only small amounts from the later period, suggesting gradual decline and abandonment at this time. Also recovered was a late 1st century AD bronze fibula. The size of this site would point to it being a farmstead rather than anything larger.

iii) At the southern edge of the parish towards Burgate several sherd concentrations were found within an area of about 18 ha. and may represent a village. Again the pottery dated from the late Iron Age to the 4th century AD.

iv) Another major settlement was found close

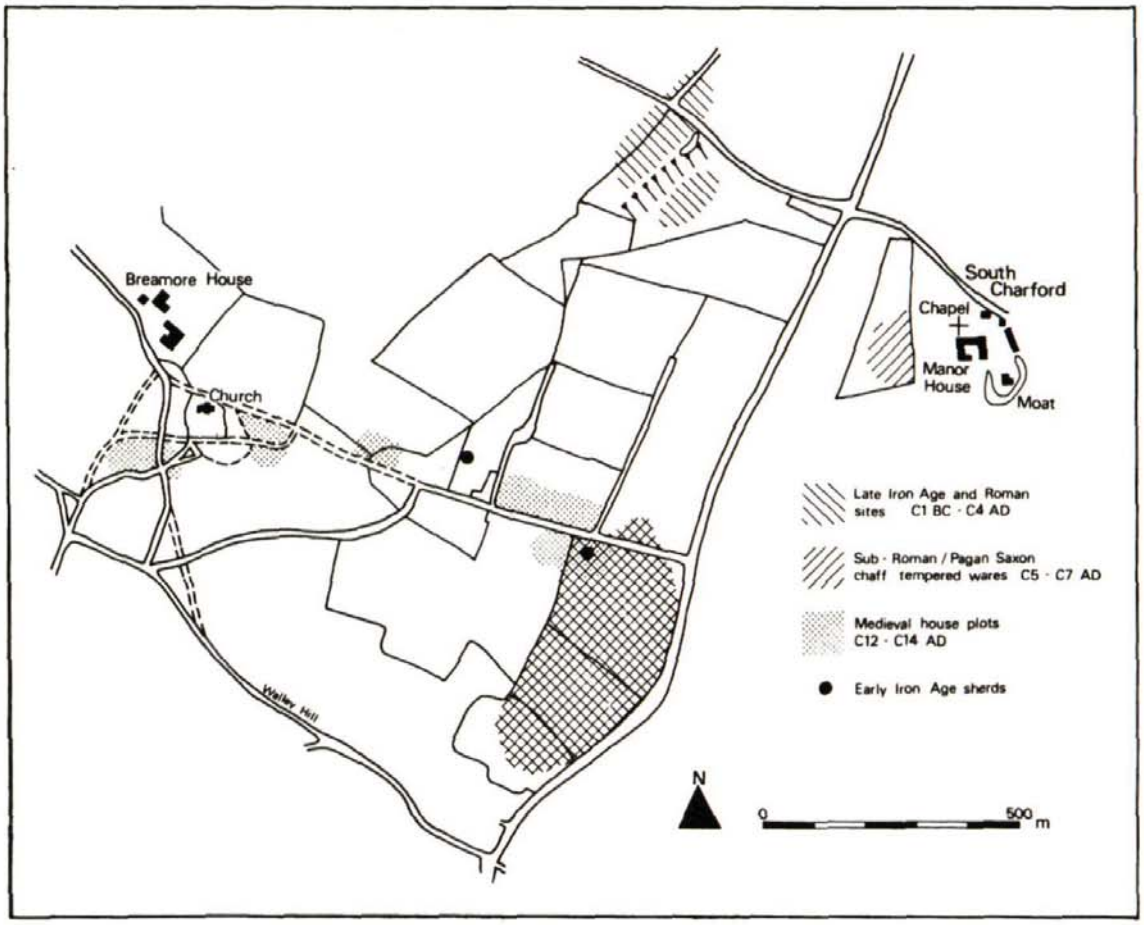

Fig 28. Evidence for occupation between Breamore and South Charford

to the present day village of Breamore on the edge of the river terrace above the floodplain; it covered about 15 ha. (Figure 28). Two early Iron Age sherds were found immediately adjacent to the scatter but the material largely dates from the late Iron Age to the 4th century, with indications of 6th century occupation in the form of chaff-tempered pottery, which occurred very widely over the Roman scatter, albeit in much smaller quantities. A Constantinian coin of *c* 340 AD and a flint lathe tool were also found on this site. A small trial excavation under the heaviest part of the sherd scatter revealed a number of postholes and gullies but little significant stratification.

v) At the northern boundary of the map shown in Figure 28 are two more sites, immediately adjacent to one another. The more northerly of the two lies on the gravel valley terrace and consists of an extremely heavy scatter of late Iron Age to 4th century AD pottery, with one possible sherd of chaff-tempered pottery, covering about 2.5 ha. The site, even taken with its neighbour, is clearly of hamlet size, in contrast to the village-sized scatter to the south. The medieval drove

from south Charford to the downs runs uphill through the site.

At the foot of the terrace, below the first site was an entirely separate scatter of similar date but perhaps one-third of the size. The sites are divided by the steep slope of the terrace, which was barren of sherds and presumably originally wooded.

The lower site may be associated with a suggested trackway running from the large villa at West Park, Rockbourne, to the ford at Charford. This survives today as a modern road from approximately the front of the villa courtyard as far as a hilltop near Breamore Wood, a length of 3 km, but is then lost within the later field system. Its line may well be perpetuated, however, in the field boundary at the foot of the slope below the lower of the two sites, which joins the drove at the valley bottom. It may be significant that the sherd scatter from the latter site does not cross this line, perhaps suggesting that it was also a Romano-British property boundary, at least along this stretch. The upper of the sites, on the other hand, does cross manorial and parish boundaries, suggesting that they are later, probably Saxon, in origin and do not perpetuate earlier alignments.

Finally, two further sites within Breamore parish produced chaff-tempered sherds but unassociated with preceding Romano-British occupation sites. One of these was at South Charford, to the west of the medieval and modern farm (see Figure 28), where the edge of a scatter of eroded sherds was related to a 6th century Pagan Saxon long-brooch. The pottery clearly continued eastwards in the pasture field adjoining the farm and presumably indicates the location of part of the original Pagan Saxon settlement.

The other site lies on the gravel terrace to the south of Breamore Wood and is probably of similar date, but the evidence is less substantial. Line-walking produced only a thin field scatter of Romano-British pottery and two small areas of burnt flint. However, the latter were later re-examined and several sherds were found apparently in association: two Romano-British, three chaff-tempered and 1 medieval. A detailed survey of the area is necessary to determine the nature and extent of the site, but as yet this has not been possible.

Other sites

It remains to comment briefly on some of the other occupation sites within the survey area. The Allen's Farm kiln site was found prior to the fieldwalking, as noted above. It was a pottery kiln dating to the third century AD. Of particular interest is the fact that the pottery produced there does not appear to have gone to the Rockbourne villa in any quantity, despite its close proximity and the fact that it was certainly occupied during this period.

Finally, the Crystal Hollow, Godshill occupation site should be mentioned, which has recently been excavated (Light 1990, 18; 1991, 35–6). The site appears to have been a small settlement with features which seem to represent two streets in the Roman period. Occupation began in the early Iron Age and the latest pottery on the site dates to the late 3rd or early 4th century AD

THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

Introduction

Of the 124 fields walked only 13 failed to produce medieval pottery, of which 5 were in a group at the western edge of the manor of Burgate on the gravel terrace near to the London Clay, an area which has only been partially cleared for agriculture in the past few centuries. Three others were in a small patch of meadow at Harbridge and two on the edge of the downland at Breamore. No field which is known from documentary sources to have been medieval arable was totally barren of contemporary pottery. The distribution of fieldwalking evidence for the medieval period is shown in Figure 29.

The majority of the land walked was medieval open-field, but with a considerable number of areas which must have originated as closes on the peripheries of the villages. The overall densities varied in most cases between 0.5 and 8.0 sherds per hectare, with some of the variation being accounted for by day-to-day fieldwalking

conditions. Heavy scatters representing deserted house plots were discovered at Gorley, Harbridge, Midgham, Breamore and Outwick; in most cases densities of sherds on these were 20–50 sherds per hectare, the variation depending to a considerable extent on the proportion of the field occupied by the scatter. In a few instances, notably at Harbridge and Bickton, heavy concentrations of sherds were found in fields which did not appear to contain house plots. These, although relatively near to the villages, seemed to be no more than dense 'manuring scatters' on the arable.

To the south-west of Fordingbridge an area of 14.5 ha. which was part of Lulsey open-field produced an exceptionally heavy deposit of medieval and later pottery. The town's arable area was small for its population size and consequently a large quantity of pottery found its way onto a relatively small acreage. A field of 2.5 ha. immediately to the west was not part of Lulsey field and seems from the very light scatter to have been only rarely ploughed. As it was more marginal land, cultivation there may have been restricted to a short period in the 13th and early 14th centuries when the town was expanding rapidly.

There are very few sherds from the survey area which can be dated from before the 12th century with any degree of certainty. Mid and late Saxon wares are not represented and there has consequently been very little new information to help locate the sites of the pre-conquest villages. The bulk of the pottery is of 'Dorset type' sand and gravel tempered cooking and storage vessels, with a few examples of strap-handled jugs; tempering with small/medium flint was also fairly common. A small number of sherds of glazed jugs and pitchers was also found, together with occasional examples of other glazed forms. Later medieval wares were largely in the tradition of the post-medieval 'Verwood' types, but with a fabric heavily tempered with fine sand; they were mainly oxidised although occasionally reduced.

A few examples of medieval glazed ridge-tiles were found, notably on the Priory land at Bullcroft, Breamore, and on one of the houseplots at Outwick. Non-ceramic finds were few but a 14th century iron crossbow bolt was recovered at Breamore.

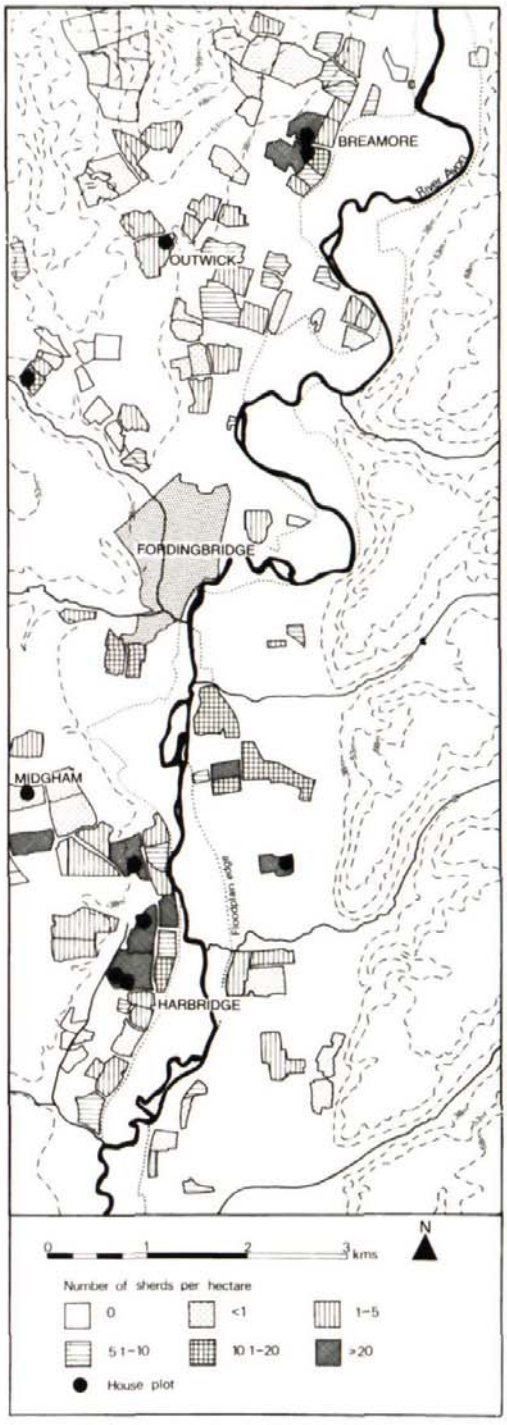

Fig 29. The distribution of medieval pottery in the survey area

In addition to the general fieldwalking, several areas were selected for a detailed examination of their medieval evidence.

Harbridge

The village of Harbridge lies on the west bank of the Avon, occupying the valley bottom and the gravel terrace as far west as the Dorset border. The total area of the parish is about 280 ha., of which 133 ha., or approximately 47%, has been walked. Of the unwalked portion, some 60 ha. are on the marginal heathlands so that over 60% of the core of the village has been investigated (Figure 30).

At the time of the survey the bulk of the arable around the village itself was held by a large company farm and in recent years the enlargement of fields and deep ploughing have revealed large quantities of unabraided sherds, particularly from houseplots within the valley. The remaining areas have always been farmed by more traditional methods and here the sherds are smaller and more weathered.

The village is first recorded in the Domesday survey, although nothing is known of the early site and no evidence of this was produced by fieldwork, despite investigation of the most likely areas near to the church. The name Harbridge is derived from the personal name Herda (Cameron 1961).

The early history of the manor is complex and the account in the Victoria County History (Page 1911, 604–5) is unsatisfactory. By at least the 13th century it was held jointly with the manor and town of Ringwood, and this association was to largely continue through the following centuries, under a succession of Crown tenants. There are consequently similarities in their management, such as the ending of demesne farming and disposal of the demesne land before 1300 (PRO SC11/595). In the case of Harbridge it is probable that both the manor house and the demesne had been granted to the Punchardon family before 1263, remaining as a separate estate until eventually being merged back into the manor proper late in the 17th century. It is likely that the manor house was on the site of the post-medieval Northend House.

Harbridge is not well documented before the 16th century but the two 14th century rentals which do exist record a total of 13 customaries and two cottars (PRO SC11/595, SC12/14/54). However, in common with many others, the village was to suffer a contraction of the population resulting from successive plagues, so that by 1442 it was allowed an abatement of 6/8d on its total tax assessment of 63/- (PRO E179/173/106). The more detailed records of the 16th and 17th centuries show that the village remained at its reduced size for much of the time. The customs of the manor listed in a survey of 1593 (HRO 51M74/M2) refer to 'the thirteen tenants' but only 10 holdings are recorded as owing rent, whilst court papers and rentals of the following century give similar totals. It is not until the 18th century that there is evidence of gradual expansion.

Much of the present-day village is set around Harbridge Green and this is likely to have been the site of the high-medieval settlement (see Figure 31). Only the land to the west of the green was under cultivation during the fieldwalking survey, but here post-medieval houseplots which have now been largely returned to arable provided ample evidence of their medieval ancestry, with high concentrations of 13th and 14th century sherds and a succession of material dating as late as the present century. Immediately to the east, beyond the road from the church, a further site is perhaps suggested by other areas of contemporary sherds.

To the south of the green a farmstead abandoned earlier in this century was finally cleared and returned to arable in recent years. From here post-medieval pottery and building material were recovered in considerable quantities, as well as medieval sherds indicating an origin for the farmstead in the 12th century at the latest. The field containing this now has an area of 16 ha., but at the time of the 1793 survey (HRO 51M74) there were 32 separate plots here and the configuration of these strongly suggests that the farm was set within its own surrounding land block of about 26 acres (10.5 ha.). The largest spreads of medieval sherds were near to the site of the post-medieval house, although a separate patch near to Kent Lane indicated that a

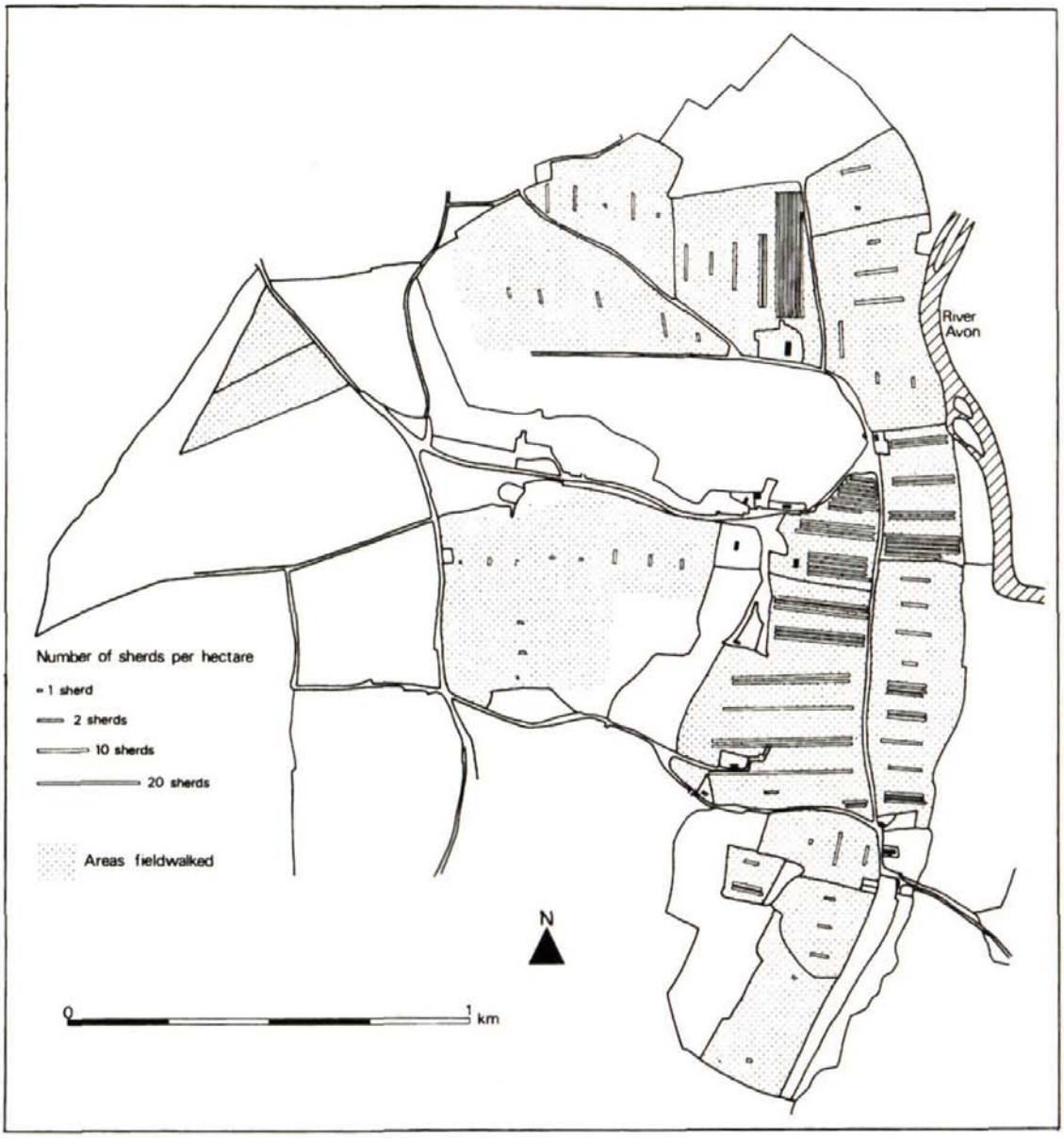

Fig 30. The distribution of medieval pottery at Harbridge

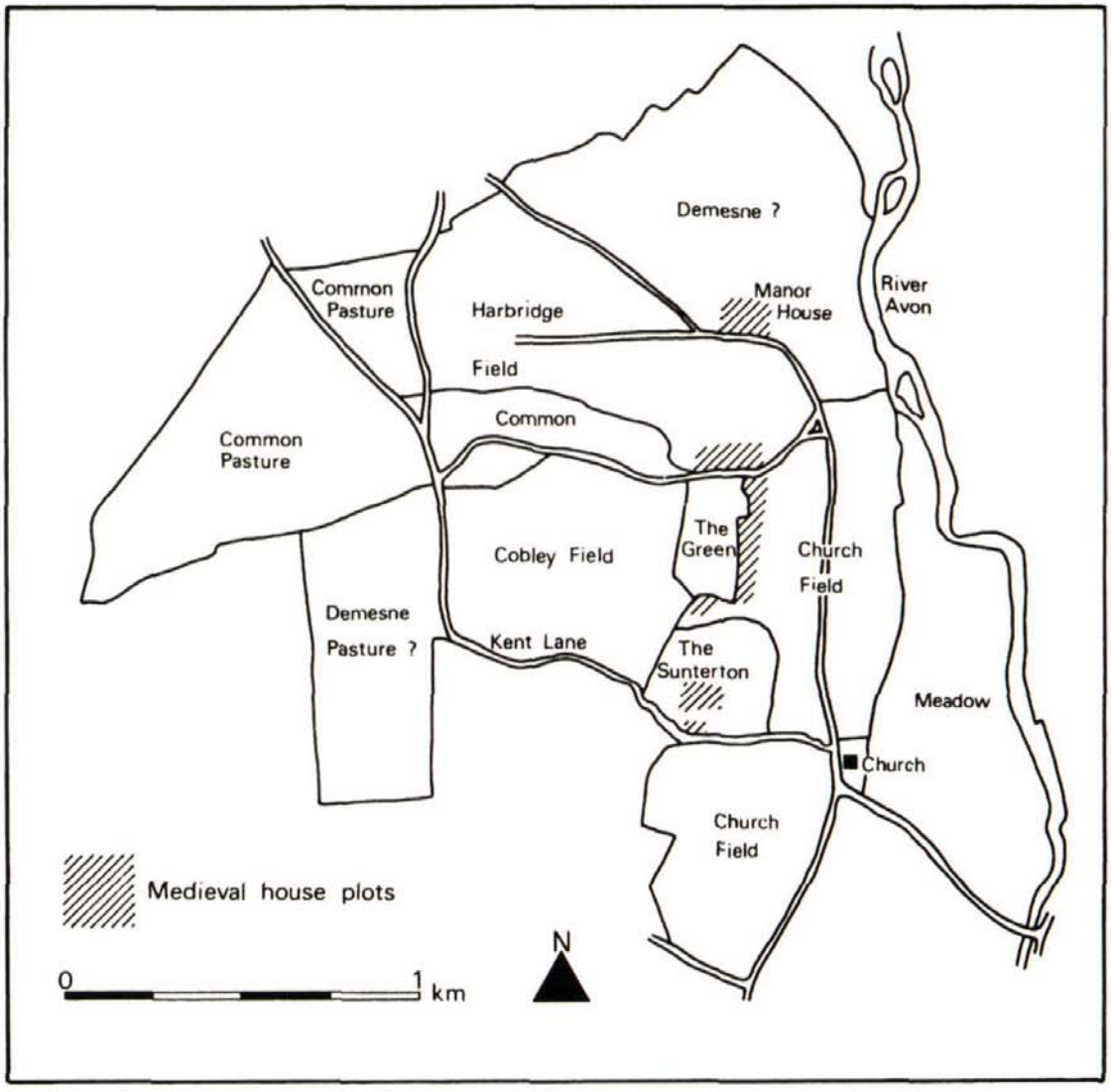

Fig 31. The medieval village of Harbridge

cottage shown on the 1793 map may have succeeded a medieval dwelling. A small group of arable strips shown on the 1793 map to the north of the farm are recorded as being 'in Sunterton Field', a name which implies that the holding was once known as 'the Sunterton', i.e. 'the separate or privileged farm', probably with its lands outside the village open-field system (see Figure 32). As there are no recorded early freeholds, it must be assumed that this was one of the larger villein holdings.

Northend House is a modern structure but it replaces earlier ones on the same site shown on the Tithe Map of 1842 (Hampshire RO) and the

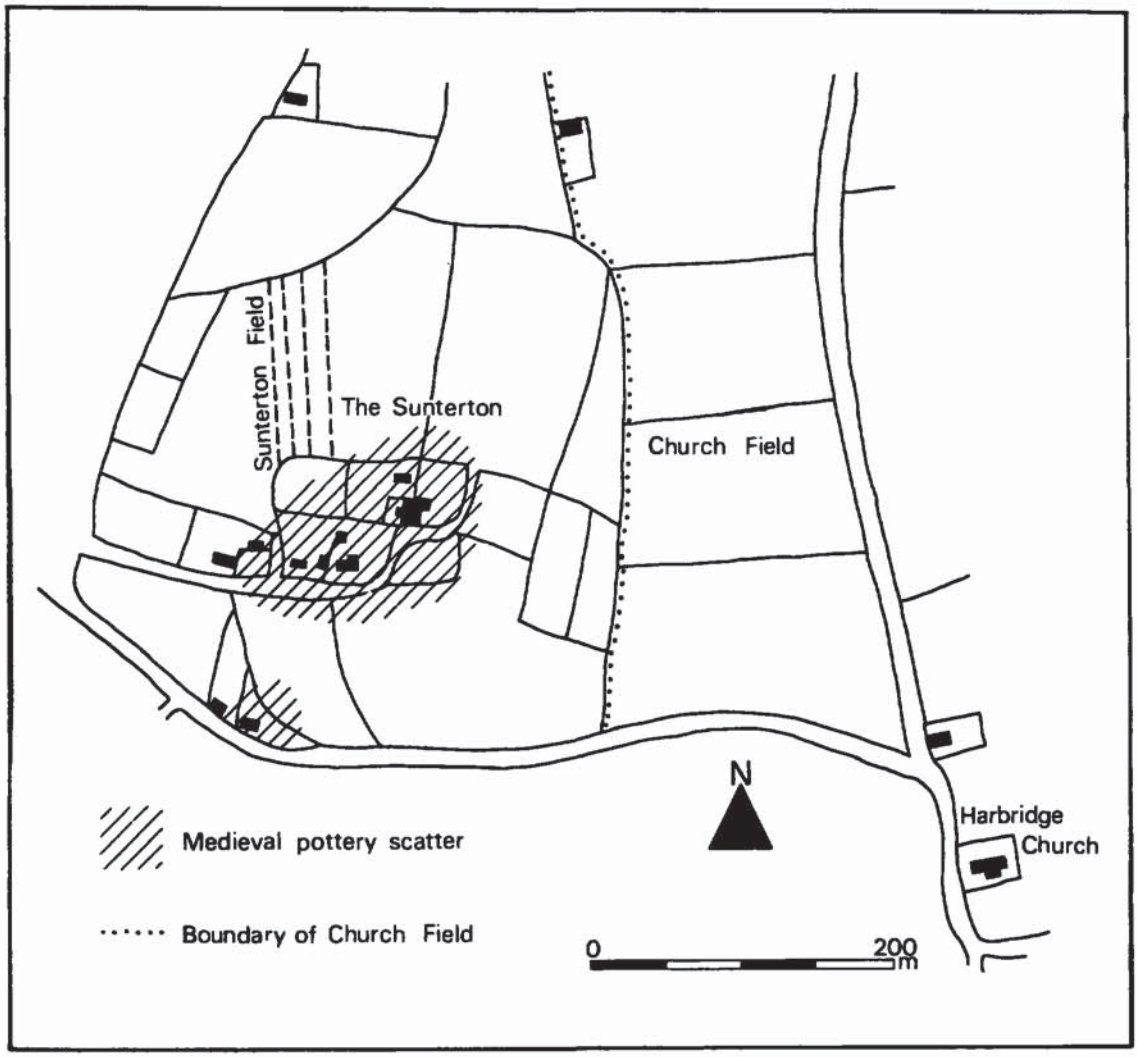

Fig 32. The Sunterton area in the medieval period

1793 Estate Map; documents imply its existence in earlier centuries. The present-day garden is relatively small, but it was larger in the last century and medieval sherd scatters to its north and east imply that its medieval predecessor occupied an area of about an acre. The quantity of 12th to 14th century pottery recovered from here was larger than from any other contemporary site within the survey area, and it was clear from the overall pottery spread that occupation had been more or less continuous until modern times. Whilst the range of medieval pottery types was broadly comparable to that from other sites, there was a larger proportion of glazed wares than would normally be expected from more humble farms and cottages.

Analysis of the post-medieval copyholds and comparison with medieval rentals suggests that the total area of the tenanted arable would not have exceeded 190 acres (79 ha.) and may have been somewhat less. By adding the acreages from which medieval sherds were recovered to the documented areas of open-field a total of about 360 acres (146 ha.) is obtained, which would imply that the demesne and tenanted areas were approximately equal in size. There is no evidence to show whether the demesne was held entirely in open-field strips or whether some was enclosed into separate blocks.

There were three distinct open-fields, but as they were apparently far from equal in size there is no clear evidence for either a two or three field system. Church Field, onto which some of the tofts would have backed, stretched along the edge of the gravel terrace overlooking the meadow land and contained a minimum of 120 acres (49 ha.), although the boundary with Harbridge Field is uncertain. Here, even beyond the areas which must have constituted the tenement crofts, sherd numbers were exceptionally high and on average were about four times greater than the quantity recovered from Cobley Field (67 acres) and Harbridge Field (148 acres). As a general rule, sherd numbers everywhere decreased with distance from the settlements.

Some indication of the effect of medieval clearance in the vicinity of Northend Farm is given by the evidence from the excavation of the burnt mound referred to above. The presence of medieval sherds at the bottom of a 35 cm deep layer of sandy clay loam beneath the modern topsoil and lying on top of the Bronze Age land surface (see Figure 6) shows that local clearance led to major erosion episodes with deposition of the eroded deposits immediately downhill. The lack of evidence for earlier deposition at the burnt mound site points to the medieval clearance as being the first in the vicinity.

Very few fields failed to produce at least a thin 'manuring scatter' of medieval sherds. At East Moor, however, to the north of Northend House, a blank area coincided with a thin and extremely stony soil which is unsuitable even for repeated modern cultivation.

On the valley terrace near the western edge of the parish is a large area of arable and woodland plantation known as the Whitefield. Until the 18th century this was common grazing belonging exclusively to 'the thirteen tenants' according to the 1593 survey. By 1789 it had been divided up and distributed amongst the existing tenancies as additional arable (HRO, Land Tax 1775, 51M74/M9). Sherd scatters here confirm the documentary evidence; a small quantity of 17th to 19th century local glazed wares being the only pottery present, with the absence of medieval types implying that there was no earlier cultivation.

In general, the fieldwork evidence supports the information which can be gained from the documents as regards the layout of the village. It was possible, however, to extend considerably the previous knowledge of the location and extent of the high-medieval settlement and also of the Manor House, which was tenanted as a separate holding. No medieval sherds dating from before the 12th century were found, however, and the site of the earlier village remains uncertain.

Breamore

Like Harbridge, Breamore parish lies to the west of the Avon, occupying both the valley floor and its terraces, with a large area of chalk downland to the north-west. It is, however, larger than Harbridge and its manorial organization is considerably more complex. The medieval village and the fieldwalking results are shown in Figures 33 and 34.

Documentary evidence

Breamore was a royal manor until it came into the possession of the de Redvers family soon after 1100 AD, from which time until the 16th century both they and their successors as Earls of Devon were Lords of the Manor (Page 1911). In about 1130 Baldwin de Redvers founded a Priory of Augustinian canons near to the river, and numerous small grants of land and tenements to the Prior and canons led to the eventual establishment of two distinct manors within the village. By about 1350 the Priory was in possession of about half of the tenanted land and also held considerable areas on the edge of the

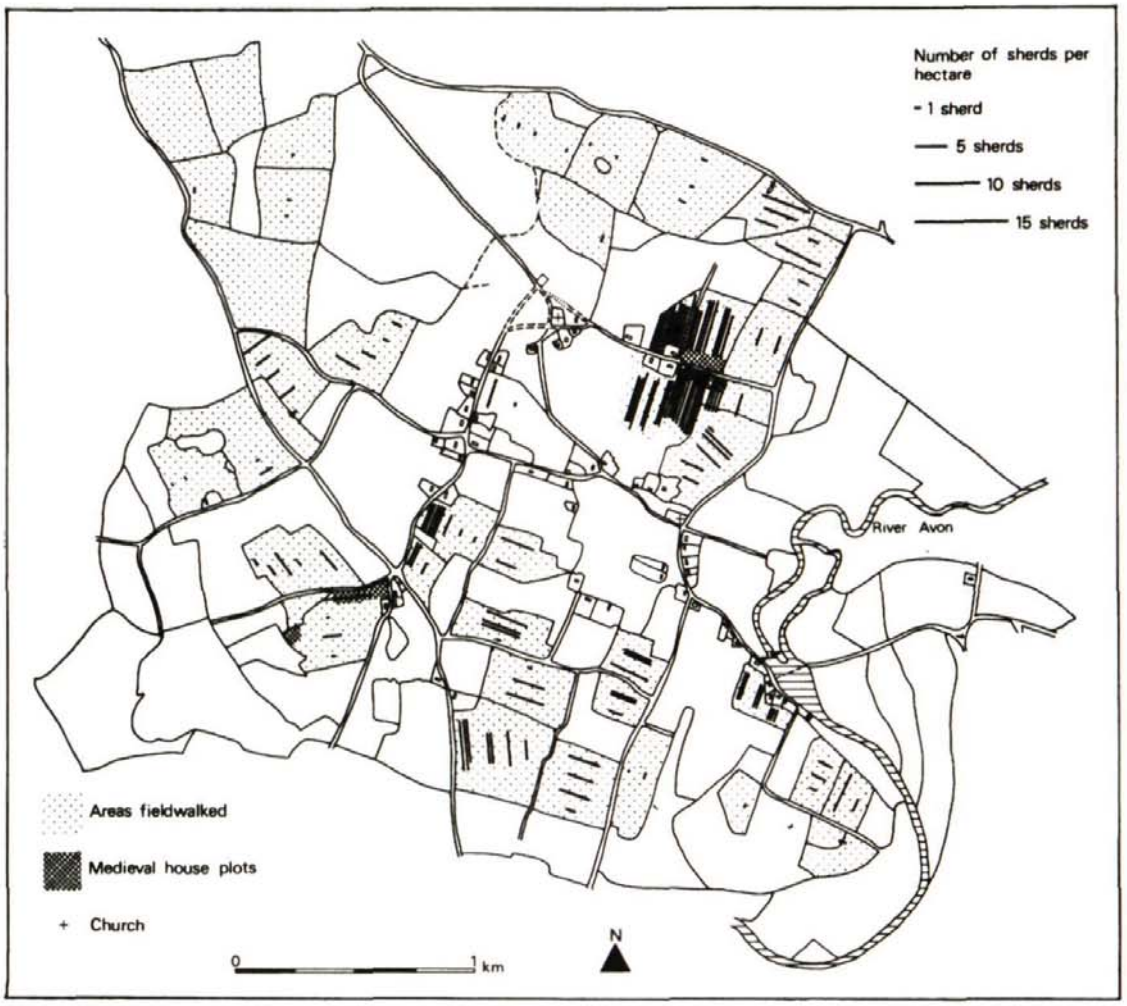

Fig 33. The distribution of medieval pottery at Breamore

parish in demesne. This was to form the post-dissolution manor of Breamore Bulbarne. The original manor of Breamore was, of course, proportionately reduced in size and in due course came to be known as Breamore Courtney, after the family who succeeded the de Redvers as Earls of Devon.

Twelve families are recorded in the Domesday survey as well as three in the hamlet of Outwick, (see below) which was held separately throughout the medieval period. There is as yet no evidence to confirm the site of the pre-conquest village, although the medieval manor house seems to have been near to the existing 16th century Breamore House. The church was built within a few decades either side of 1000 AD and served for a short time as a Minster, with its parish probably extending as far as the villages of Rockbourne, Whitsbury and the Charfords.

As would be expected, the village had reached

its greatest extent and attained its highest population by the late 13th century. Habitation was by now spread along West Street and North Street, around the Marsh and along the lane to the Mill (see Figure 34). There had clearly been a gradual spread southwards during the 12th century, with encroachment onto the edges of the Marsh and the growth of a small settlement called Milton near to the Mill newly erected by the Priory. The latest phase of expansion probably saw tenements erected at Flood Street near Charlewood, and on the centre of the Marsh.

There are no precise records of the number of holdings but a total of between fifty and sixty seems probable. As with most villages, the post-plague decline worsened in the 15th century and several tenements remained empty. An abatement of 6/8d was allowed from the total tax assessment of 73/2d in 1442 (PRO E179/173/106). In 1421 the rent total had been little more than half the 14th century amount (PRO C138/63), but by the end of the century recovery was under way and a high proportion of the house sites continued to be occupied through to modern times.

The village open-fields were largely on the valley bottom and its slopes, although by the 12th and 13th centuries considerable areas on the peripheries had been brought under the plough. The arable of the early village was probably largely around Northfield and Southfield (see Figure 34) but with the growth of population in the 1200s a number of new fields were created from the 'waste', producing an increasingly complex system of rotation. It is certain that a two-field system was maintained throughout the medieval period (PRO E326/596) but there are indications that two separate systems may have existed side-by-side, based on administrative areas known as Over and Nether Breamore (Hants RO 1M53/195–200). Much of the early post-medieval life of the village was certainly based around such an arrangement and an earlier origin seems likely. The foci of these rotations were the original North and South Fields but separate smaller fields were gradually incorporated into the scheme.

The arable strips of the two manors were distributed haphazardly through the fields (PRO Ancient Deeds), although much of the land held by the Priory was in Nether Breamore while the field of Over Breamore was largely retained within the original manor of Breamore (Breamore House Muniments), presumably as a matter of policy. In excess of 700 acres (283 ha.) were tenanted in the open-fields by the 13th century and this was supplemented by the cultivation of separate closes in a number of newly cleared areas.

Fieldwalking results

With the exception of the downland, the whole of the village of Breamore (about 810 ha.) lies within the survey area, and 40 fields, totalling 278 ha. were walked. About 350 ha. are permanent pasture, meadow or woodland, so *c* 60% of the area potentially available has been investigated.

About 100 ha. of open-field were walked and without exception these produced a thin or moderate 'manuring scatter' of eroded medieval sherds dating from the 12th century onwards. In most areas there was evidence of ploughing at all periods until modern times and in general, as with the Roman settlements, there was a tendency for the scatter to decrease in density with distance from the inhabited parts. Near to existing dwellings there was frequently a dramatic increase in sherd numbers; presumably these areas represent the medieval crofts which have in many cases been incorporated into the general arable fields in recent centuries.

By the 13th century the manorial demesne was held in two blocks, to the east and west of the deer park (see Figure 34). Both were on chalky soil and between them had a total area of about 180 acres (73 ha.). The sherd scatter here was thinner than on the open-fields, although whether this was a result of a different manure source (i.e. from the manor farm) which accumulated less pottery, or simply a matter of distance from the village, is not clear.

On the edge of the downlands to the north of the demesne arable 25 ha. known as Burnbake were brought under the plough in the 18th century according to the documentary record (Breamore House Muniments). Some 18 ha. of this were walked without recovering medieval pottery, suggesting that the boundary of the demesne was the furthest extent of contemporary cultivation.

To the south of the same block of demesne are

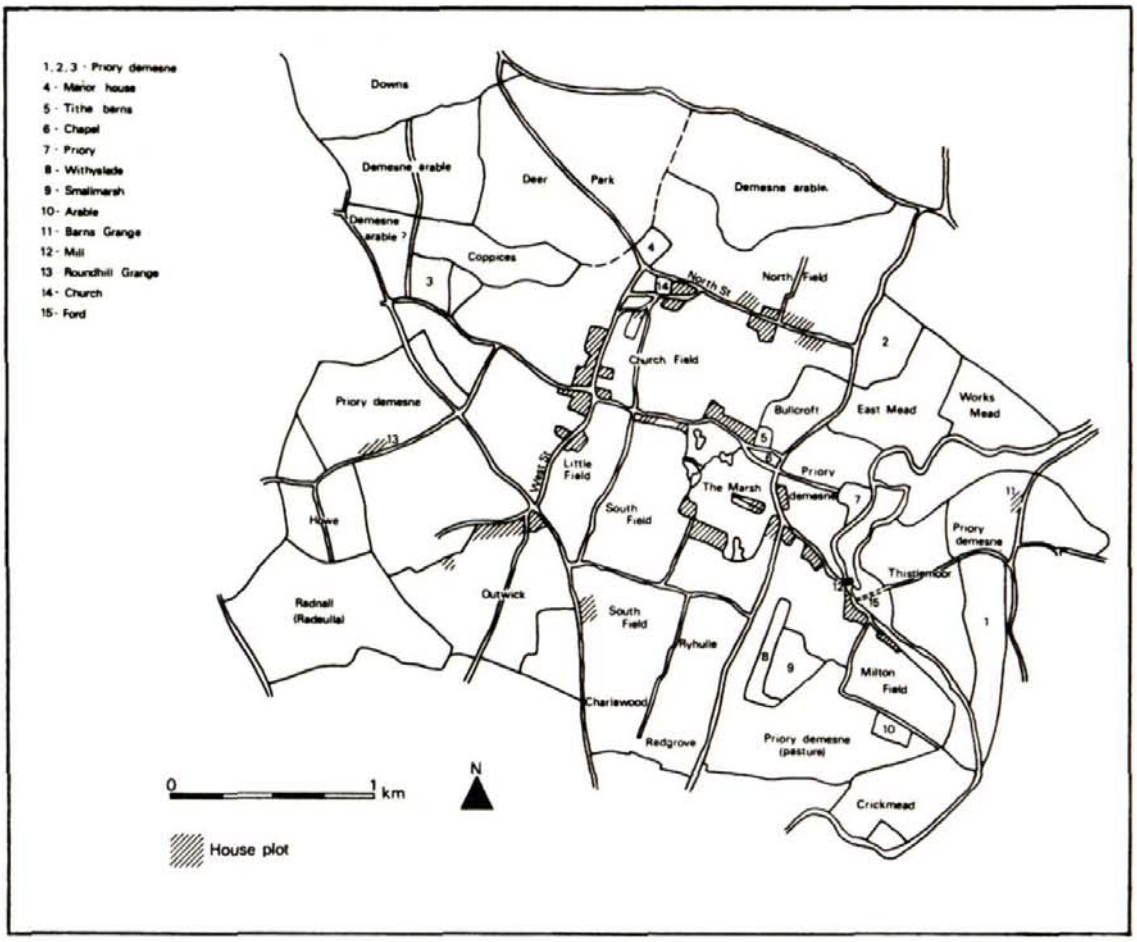

Fig 34. The medieval village of Breamore

about 40 acres (16 ha.) which by the 16th century were known as Middlefield (Breamore House Muniments). The eastern half consists of a steep slope down from the coppices which it adjoins, while the west is mostly on the dry valley floor. There is some suggestion from documents that the higher parts were originally coppice and that clearance may not have occurred until the 16th century (Breamore House Muniments); as no pottery dating from before the 17th century was found this interpretation is probably correct. The use of the lower area, however, is less certain. Its position indicates that it may have been part of the demesne arable but as no medieval sherds were found from here either, there is no confirmation of cultivation during this period.

As far as the Priory demesne arable at Roundhill and near Milton Field is concerned (see Figure 34), here too the sherd scatter was also relatively thin, with the exception of Bullcroft, which was certainly arable in later centuries, despite its name (PRO SC6/Hen VIII 7415); here the density of sherds was one of the heaviest found on any field not containing a dwelling.

Of the three existing houses at North St., two are on ancient house sites and two others are known to have existed nearby until the last century. However, heavy medieval sherd concentrations to the east suggest that the group was originally larger. It is difficult to be precise as to the number of deserted sites but up to four is possible. There are occasional medieval references to the lands in this part of the village (e.g. PRO E326/610, E326/3587, E326/629), but no dwellings are mentioned and the existence of a group of between six and eight in all has not been previously suspected.

Immediately south-east of the church is a terrace upon which are set the two existing half-timbered houses. There is little doubt that these are also on medieval sites and that they are the sole survivors of a group of similar size to that in North St. There are signs of tenement boundaries within the Park, adjoining the old track which led to the church, and although this is pasture and woodland today, medieval sherds can be readily found here in rabbit scrapes and molehills. The part of the park to the east of the church was ploughed in 1980, revealing a concentration of eroded 12th–14th century sherds, largely from a low bank which again may have been a division between tenements (see Figure 33). However, on none of these sites was there conclusive evidence of sherds dating from later than the 14th century

It is probable that the majority of the tenements of Over Breamore were at one time along the line of North Street, up to and beyond the church, although there is still no archaeological evidence for the early village site, which is likely to have been nearby.

Finally, it is of interest to compare the distribution of material recovered during fieldwalking for the medieval period in Breamore with the post-medieval distribution (Figures 33 and 35). Only in certain areas with house plots does the medieval distribution begin to approach the density of that for the post-medieval period which is characterised by a generalised high density over most of the area. It seems most unlikely that this can be ascribed to differential preservation factors so it must presumably be connected to a greater intensity of manuring and/or a greater consumption of pottery by village households. One suspects it is a combination of the two and it is not clear how one would distinguish their relative roles.

In addition to this general contrast between the two periods, there are also some more specific ones which must relate to changing land-use patterns. Thus, by far the greatest increase in density of field scatters is in the south-eastern part of the parish while those in the west do not seem to see a corresponding increase in the rate of manuring, or were manured from different sources with far less household debris.

Outwick

By the time of the Domesday survey, Outwick was held separately from the remainder of the village of Breamore. It was then assessed at 1½ virgates, with half a ploughland, one villein, one bordar, three acres of meadow and a small wood. The holding stayed largely intact throughout the medieval period, although one villein tenement on the site of what was to become Outwick Farm was granted to the Priory in about 1300 (PRO E326/3974). Outwick is shown in Figure 34, the medieval manor map of Breamore, and its medieval fieldwalking evidence in Figure 27.

The post-medieval holding, which otherwise is likely to have changed very little in extent, measured about 96 acres (39 ha.) (Breamore House Muniments Survey R6 1770), of which just over 22 (9 ha.) have been walked. The existing hamlet lies near to the cross, on either side of the road to Fordingbridge, although it is now reduced in size, with a much lower population than a century ago. In 1851 there were eight households, with over 80 inhabitants (1851 census), while in recent years there have only been four, with a population of about ten.

It is now clear that the medieval hamlet was largely in a different position from its successor. Heavy sherd scatters were located along the south side of the lane to Severals and the eroded remains of house-plot boundaries still survive, some having been incorporated into the post-medieval field system (see Figure 33). The sherd scatter dates largely from the 12th to the 14th

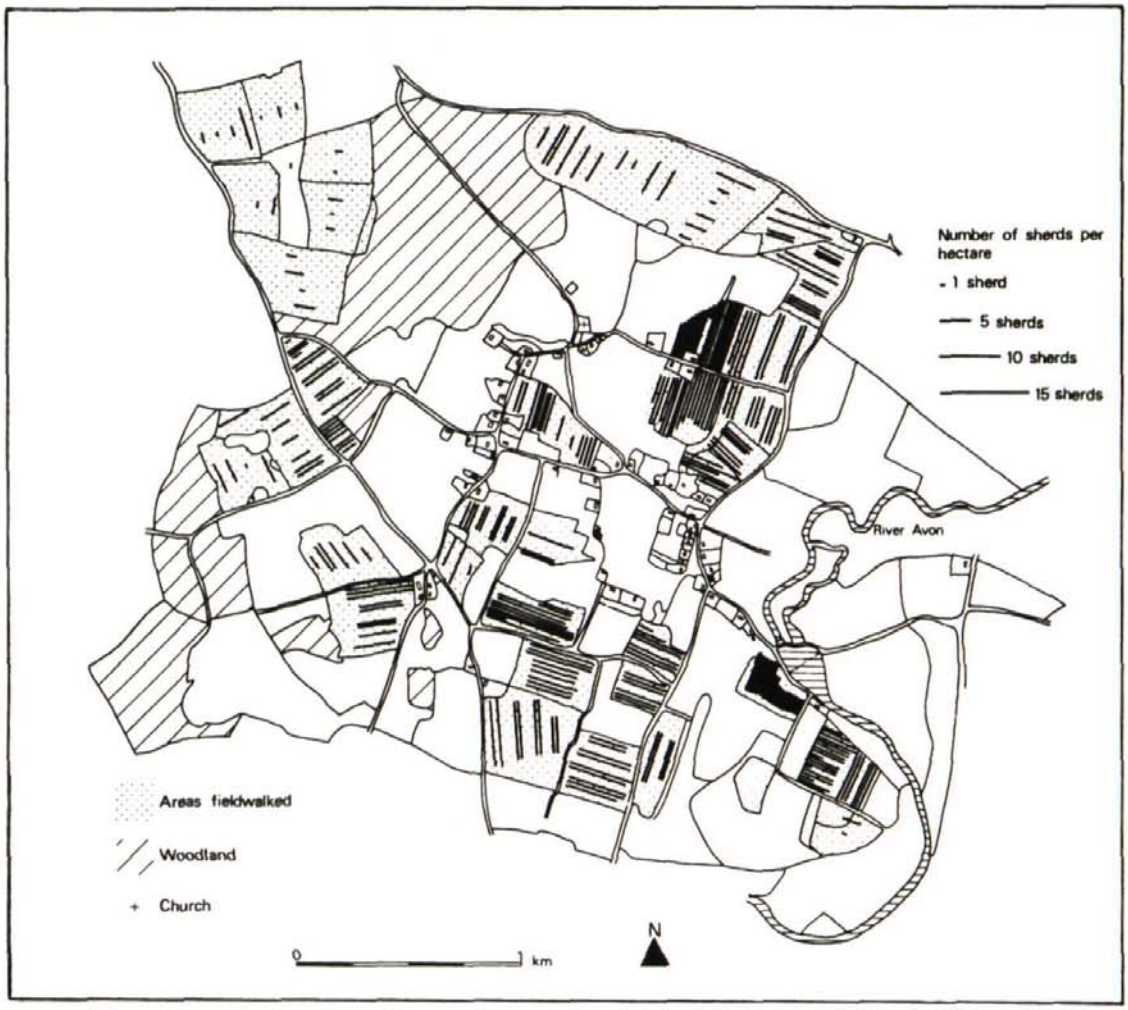

Fig 35. The distribution of post-medieval pottery at Breamore

centuries although a few pieces of somewhat later fabric may suggest that the shift of habitation did not take place until the 15th century. Unfortunately, these sherds cannot be related to the house-plots with any degree of certainty and may simply result from later manuring of the newly created arable.

There are indications of four or perhaps five separate plots here to which must be added the Outwick Farm site and a further one some 300 m to the south-west, on the edge of Kiln Wood. This name is thought to have resulted from post-medieval brick-making, and large areas of clay workings within the wood support this view. However, given the isolated position of this plot, near to the clay source, a medieval tile-making industry here is perhaps a possibility which should be further investigated.

Midgham

In the Domesday Survey two separate holdings were recorded and these were to continue as North and South Midgham until they were amalgamated during the 15th century (PRO Chancery IPM 1473 Parker). There are few reliable details of the size of the villages, although 12 bordars are mentioned in 1086 and the Lay Subsidy of 1333 lists 6 taxpayers apart from the respective Lords of the Manors (PRO E179/242/15a). In both documents the manor of North Midgham is said to be approximately twice the size of its neighbour. In 1442 an abatement of 3/4d was allowed from the total tax due of 33/8d and by the end of the century much of the village had been apparently deserted, as later records imply that the population was low, with few houses (PRO E179/173/106, E179/174/434).

Today there is little sign of the early settlement apart from Midgham Farm, which is assumed to be on the site of North Midgham Manor House; only one other cottage which is possibly on a medieval site survives. The boundary of the manors was retained into the 19th century as a Tithing of the parish of Fordingbridge (HRO Tithe Map 1842), but there is no clear indication as to how the lands of each manor were distributed.

The fields walked (51.6 ha.) all produced thin scatters of medieval sherds indicating contemporary arable, but towards the south-west heavy patches of 12th to 15th century pottery point to the site of what was probably the village of South Midgham, aligned along a track which is now a footpath (see Figure 36). It is difficult to estimate the number of households, but at least five and possibly more would seem likely. The site has been largely under plough throughout the post-medieval period and there is now little in the way of surviving earthworks apart from the eroded line of the track, which appears to split and then end within the area of highest sherd density. This apparent track is of similar form to the existing one leading to Midgham Farm; it is at right angles to the north–south road and there is evidence that their junction was once a crossroads. The road today follows a sharp S-turn at this point and the alignment of the road from Harbridge suggests that it may have been diverted to its present course in the 18th or early 19th centuries. A gateway into the field still exists at the point where it seems once to have formed the eastern arm of the cross while the adjacent field to the north-west was known as Cross Field on the 1842 Tithe Map.

The post-medieval period in the survey area

Not unexpectedly, post-medieval pottery, building material, metalwork and glass was recovered in large quantities from virtually every field; the only exceptions were some of the most marginal lands which have only been cultivated in recent years. The distribution of the material was, however, fairly predictable and in general closely reflected the documentary evidence.

The vast majority of the 17th to 19th century pottery was glazed earthenware and almost all of the large amount found was of the local 'Verwood' type. No detailed assessment of this has yet been attempted but sufficient quantities exist, particularly from some of the house sites, to enable reasonable sequences to be assembled. While the 'Verwood' wares of the mid-17th to 19th centuries are well known, there is as yet little information on the forms of the previous two centuries although contemporary documentary evidence survives for production in the Alderholt area of Dorset (Verwood and District Potteries, Algar, Light and Trehane 1979). Detailed examination of pottery groups with a 12th to 18th century or later date range from Harbridge and Gorley in particular would almost certainly help to complete the sequence.

Prior to the start of the survey documentary evidence had been found for two 18th century 'Verwood' type earthenware kilns at Harbridge. The site of one, which existed into the 19th century, was known at Harbridge Green (SU 1413 1100) but the other, although mentioned as an 'old pottery' in a survey of 1789 (HRO 21M57/9), could not be located on the ground. During the survey, however, this was found, as a heavy concentration of 'waster' sherds and kiln debris in black earth at SU 1424 1070; from the range of forms present a date within the middle decades of the 18th century seems likely.

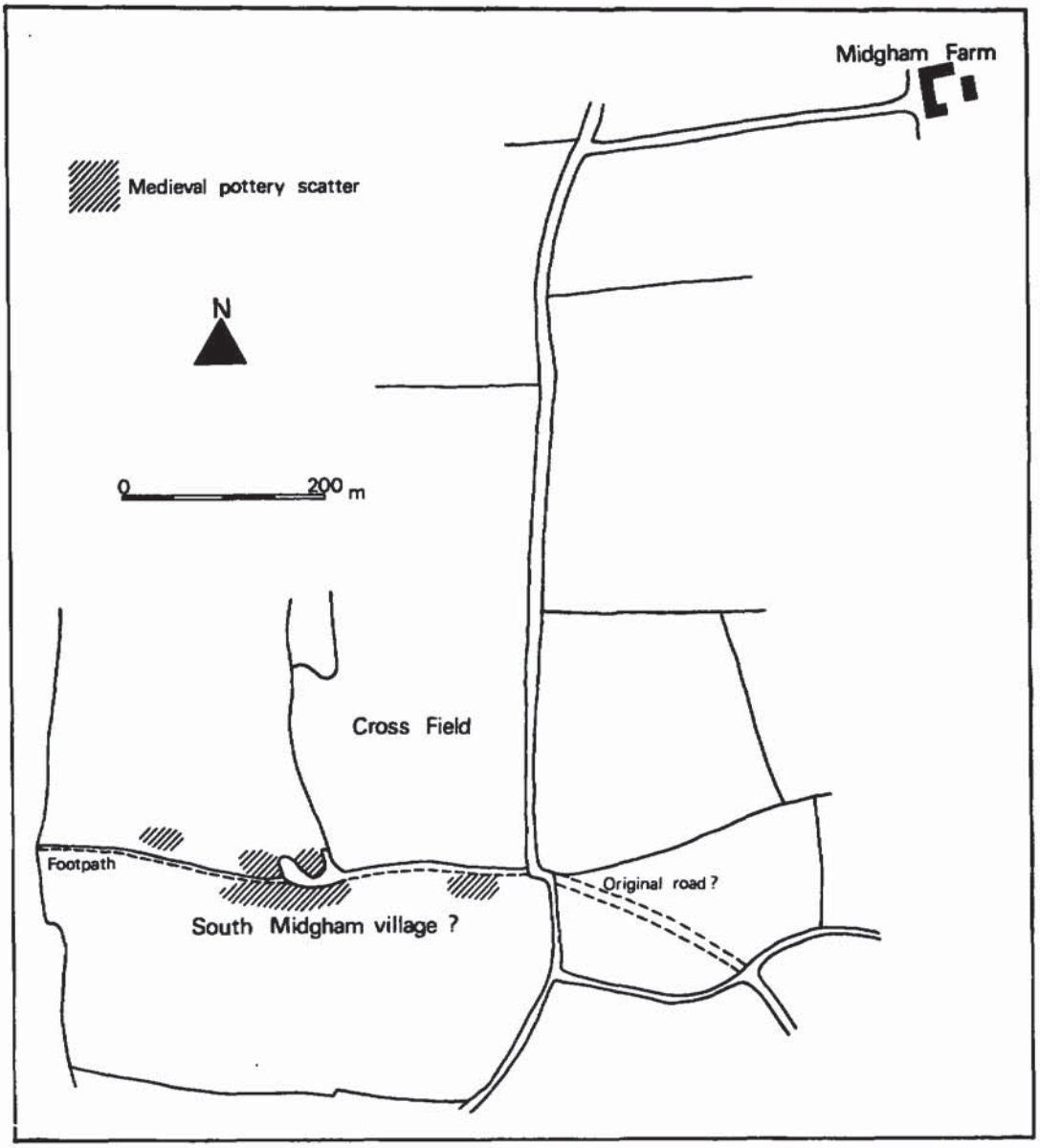

Fig 36. The distribution of medieval pottery at South Midgham

CONCLUSION

The results of the analysis of artefacts recovered from fields in the Middle Avon Valley have been presented, thereby providing a further set of results from a surface collection programme conducted in Wessex, but the first from the all-important middle reaches of a chalkland valley (Evans 1992, 49). The data suggest a broadly continuous occupation history from the late Mesolithic to the medieval period, with the evidence for Neolithic and Bronze Age settlement being of particular interest when seen in the context of the nearby monument zones of Cranborne Chase and Stonehenge, and the likely significance of the mouth of the Avon during the Early Bronze Age.

It is worth repeating the point, made elsewhere (Schofield, in press), that many surveys similar to this have now been conducted within Wessex, most adopting a similar methodology and having comparable aims and intentions. The ground has therefore been prepared for a study in "comparability", pulling the data together into a form that can provide insight into the settlement and exploitation of a region, as opposed to only foci within it. As Chisholm has observed, ". . . it is important to be able to compare one pattern with another, since it is only in this way that explanations can be offered for the distributions that one is specially interested in" (1975, 63).

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Hampshire Record Office Land Tax 1775, 51M74/M9
Hampshire Record Office Tithe Map Fordingbridge 1842
Hampshire Record Office Tithe Map, Harbridge 1842

Public Record Office Ancient Deeds
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Public Record Office Chancery IPM Extent 1473 Parker
Public Record Office E179/173/42
Public Record Office E179/173/106

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