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A SURFACE COLLECTION PROJECT AND FINDS FROM METAL DETECTING AT SHAVARDS FARM, MEONSTOKE, HAMPSHIRE

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ABSTRACT

Field-walking and metal detecting in the vicinity of previously investigated Roman and Anglo-Saxon sites at Shavards Farm, Meonstoke have provided additional evidence for land-use and settlement. Although finds from the late Iron Age through to the post-Medieval period were recovered during the field-walking, the evidence for the earlier periods is slight. Long term cultivation appears to have been a major factor influencing the distribution patterns and the differential survival of pottery. The low-fired Anglo-Saxon fabrics are likely to have suffered most from plough damage and attrition, and for that reason the period is best represented by the metal finds.

INTRODUCTION AND SURFACE COLLECTION METHOD

A limited programme of field-walking was carried out in February 1998 by Berkshire Archaeological Services across an arable field near Shavards Farm, Meonstoke. The work was funded by a grant from Hampshire County Council and formed part of the Meonstoke Landscape Project, a more extensive study being conducted by the Department of Archaeology, King Alfred's College, Winchester.

The principal aim of the field-walking project was to investigate the extent and character of surface artefact distributions in a ploughed field which had produced evidence for Anglo-Saxon settlement and prehistoric activity, and lay a short distance from the site of a Roman building (Fig. 1). Although finds of all periods were retrieved and recorded during the fieldwork, this report is concerned chiefly with material of the Roman and Anglo-Saxon periods, including finds discovered by metal detecting and previous surface collection.

The fieldwork employed a standard collection technique based on the hectare National Grid. Each hectare square was divided into runs spaced at 20 metre intervals, and each run was sub-divided into five 20 metre collection units. All finds of potential archaeological significance were collected and retained for processing. Bulk finds such as burnt flint or ceramic building material were quantified and discarded on-site, retaining a sample where appropriate. Pottery or other finds relevant to the periods of principal interest were subjected to detailed analysis. All of the finds, including discarded material and artefacts mentioned only in passing, are catalogued in the archive report.

SITE LOCATION AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Shavards Farm is situated a short distance to the north-east of Meonstoke village, within the parish of Corhampton and Meonstoke (Fig. 1). The farm occupies a low-lying position at the edge of the Meon Valley, where the floodplain is flanked by chalk downland ridges to the east and west. On the eastern side of the valley, the chalk escarpment rises to an elevation of 195 metres above Ordnance Datum at Old Winchester Hill, with its prominent Iron Age hillfort. On the opposite side of the river valley to north-west, the downland reaches a comparable height at Beacon Hill, which is surmounted by a Bronze Age barrow cemetery.

The arable field selected for surface collection covers 10.5 hectares and lies to the east of the

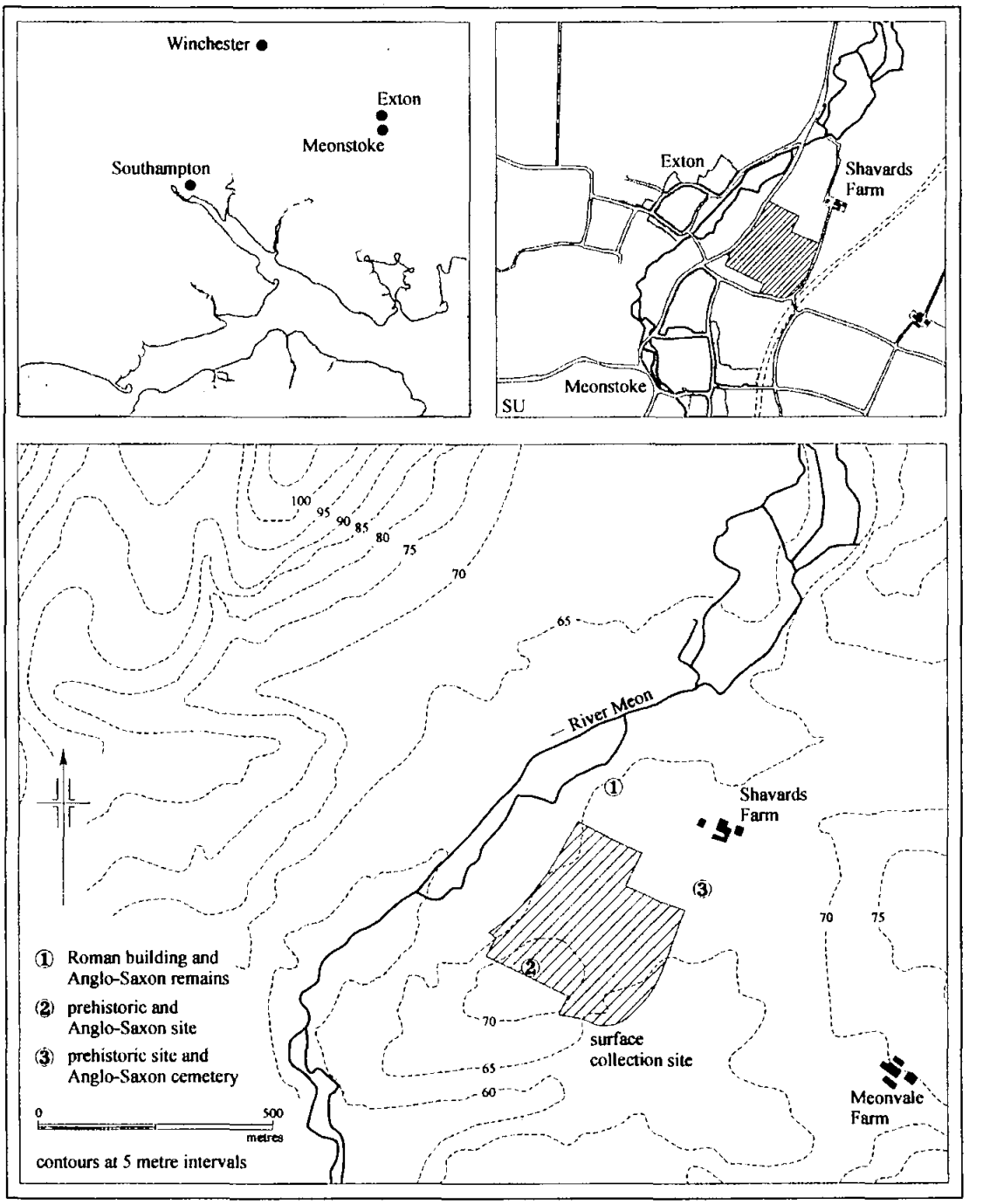

Fig. 1 Location of the surface collection field

River Meon at SU 616207 (Fig. 1). The topography of the field is relatively undifferentiated save for a low ridge of Middle Chalk in the southern part, which rises to 70 metres above Ordnance Datum. Across this higher ground the soils are light and highly calcareous, being derived directly from the chalk. In the northern part of the field these give way to heavier and more flinty colluvial soils formed over Valley Gravel.

Previous surface collection and metal detecting in the field had produced surface finds of Roman and early to middle Anglo-Saxon pottery along with a variety of copper alloy finds, including Roman coins, four previously published Anglo-Saxon brooches and a number of lead weights (Iles and Stedman 1998; Stedman and Stoodley 2000, 133). These finds were mostly concentrated on the higher ground at the southern end of the field in the vicinity of a prehistoric and Anglo-Saxon site (Fig. 1, 2). Excavations at the site produced substantial evidence for middle to late Anglo-Saxon settlement and iron working, traces of a penannular ditch containing an Iron Age crouched inhumation and a 'beehive' storage pit (Hughes 1985 and 1986).

Directly to the south of the surface collection field, recent geophysical work identified a range of anomalies, suggesting a complex of pits and ditches (Stedman and Stoodley in prep.). These features may be associated with the Iron Age and Anglo-Saxon site, although as yet they are undated.

The site of a Roman building some 100 metres to the north of the surface collection field (Fig. 1, 1) was discovered during road widening in 1937. More recent investigations of the site revealed two late Iron Age enclosure ditches and the wall foundations of a second century AD structure. This had been replaced by an aisled building, which had fallen into disuse by the end of the fourth century AD and subsequently became the focus of early Anglo-Saxon occupation (King and Potter 1990, 196).

Another prehistoric and Anglo-Saxon site was discovered a few hundred metres to the south-east of the Roman building (Fig. 1, 3). The remains consisted of an Iron Age ditch which had been reused as a cemetery during the sixth and seventh centuries AD (Devenish and Champion 1977, 37; Stoodley and Stedman 2001).

THE FINDS

Late Iron Age to Roman Period

The Pottery

Two sherds (weighing 12 grams) with a possible late Iron Age origin were found during the surface collection. An additional 17 sherds of Roman pottery (weighing 101 grams) were also recovered from the field. These range in date between the first and fourth centuries AD and all are heavily abraded. With the exception of a single sherd of Oxfordshire red colour-coat, the assemblage consists entirely of coarse wares. Most of the sherds are featureless grey wares and consequently they cannot be dated with any degree of precision.

An additional five sherds (weighing 90 grams) from an earlier collection were examined. Two of these, including a bead rim, are made from a flint tempered fabric that might be of late Iron Age origin, although they could equally post-date the Roman Conquest. With the exception of an everted rim fragment in a coarse grey ware dating to the first or second century AD, the other sherds are from vessels that could have been made at any time between the first and fourth centuries AD.

Ceramic Building Material

Forty-seven fragments of ceramic building material, with a total weight of 1511 grams, were recovered during the field-walking. These are heavily abraded and most are too small for detailed classification. The identifiable material includes one tessera, four brick fragments and part of a box flue tile with comb keying, almost certainly derived from the hypocaust at the nearby aisled building.

Coins Discovered by Metal Detecting

The ID numbers in the following catalogue are those assigned by the Winchester Museums Service.

AE follis of the House of Valentinian (AD 364–78)
Shavards Farm Collection (3)
ID number: E214/1 1999/ (RI)
The coin is of the Gloria Romanorvm type. It is very worn and has a diameter of 15–16 mm. The

obverse is illegible, with the reverse showing the Emperor dragging a fallen captive.

AE follis (c. AD 354–364)
Shavards Farm Collection (166)
ID number: E214/3: 1999 (RI)
A crude imitation of a Fel Temp Reparatio type. The coin is in worn condition and has a diameter of 10–13 mm. The reverse shows the Emperor spearing a fallen horseman.

AE radiate coin (c. AD 270's–280's)
Shavards Farm Collection (168)
ID number: E214/5: 1999 (RI)
A very worn coin with illegible inscriptions and a diameter of 12 mm. The obverse shows a right-facing bust with a radiate crown. The reverse has a crude standing figure, perhaps holding a staff.

AE radiate coin (c. AD 270's–280's)
Shavards Farm Collection (170)
ID number: E214/6 1999 (RI)
In worn condition with a diameter of 12 mm. The obverse shows a right-facing bust with an inscription, possibly VIC ... VS, [VICTORINVS?]. The reverse has a crude almost abstract design, perhaps of a standing figure with a staff.

AE follis coin probably of the Gloria Romanorvm type (c. AD 364–78)
Shavards Farm Collection (174)
ID number: E214/7 1999 (RI)
In worn condition with a diameter of 16 mm. The obverse shows a hardly visible bust, while the reverse has a very worn standing figure, possibly of an Emperor dragging a captive.

AE coin of later third or fourth century AD
Shavards Farm Collection (207)
ID number: E214/9:1999 (RI)
In very worn condition with a diameter of 12–13 mm. Both the obverse and reverse are totally illegible.

AE coin of later third or fourth century AD
Shavards Farm Collection (209)
ID: E214/10: 1999 (RI)
In very worn condition with a diameter 10–13 mm. Totally illegible obverse and reverse.

AE coin of later Roman period, possibly of the fourth-century AD
Shavards Farm Collection (211)
ID number: E214/11.1999 (RI)
The coin is worn and has been heavily over-cleaned. It has a diameter of 15–16 mm. The obverse is illegible and the reverse has a clumsily executed sub-rounded, punched perforation with a diameter of 1 mm.

Brass sestertius, probably of the second century AD (possibly an Antonine Emperor)
Shavards Farm Collection (214)
ID number: E214/13: 1999 (RI)
In very worn condition with a diameter of 30 mm. The obverse bust is unclear, but appears to be bearded. The reverse has an unidentifiable standing figure.

AE radiate coin (probably AD 270's–280's)
Shavards Farm Collection (217)
ID number: E214/14: 1998 (RI)
In very worn condition with a diameter 14–16 mm. The obverse has a right-facing radiate bust with illegible inscription. The reverse has a worn standing figure holding a staff to the right, possibly PAX.

AE radiate coin of Probus (AD 276–282 issue)
Shavards Farm Collection (218)
ID number: E214/15: 1999 (RI)
In worn condition with a diameter of 21–22 mm. The obverse shows a right-facing radiate cuiraiss bust; IMP C PROBVS PF AVG. The reverse shows Hercules standing left and holding olive branch, club and lion skin; ERCVLI PACIFERO; mint mark VXXT; Ticinum, RIC no 381.

AE follis of Constantius II: Fel Temp Reparatio type (AD 355–360)
Shavards Farm Collection (219)
ID number: E214/16: 1999 (RI)
Incomplete and in worn condition with a diameter of 16–18 mm. The obverse shows a right-facing, rosette diademed bust, but no letter behind the bust; DNC [·] TIVS PF AUG; Constantius II.

The reverse carries the image of the Emperor spearing a fallen horseman; Mint [·] PLG Lyon; Probably RIC no.190.

AE radiate coin (AD 270's–280's)
Shavards Farm Collection (220)
ID number: E214/17.1999 (RI)
In worn condition with a diameter of 17 mm. The obverse carries a right-facing, bearded and radiate bust with an illegible inscription. The reverse shows a standing figure of Pax; PAX AVG.

AE coin, possibly an As of the second to early third century AD
Shavards Farm Collection (221)
ID number: E214/18.1999 (RI)
In worn condition with a diameter of 23 mm. The obverse has a worn, illegible inscription with a laureate right-facing bust. The reverse is very worn with illegible inscription and surface damaged.

AE radiate coin of Aurelian (AD 270–275)
Shavards Farm Collection (225)
ID number: E214/21.1999 (RI)
Both surfaces are worn and there are two recent looking scratch marks on the obverse. The coin has a diameter of 20 mm and a central circular, punched perforation with a diameter of 2 mm. The obverse shows a radiate, right-facing bust with cuirass; MP.AURELIANVS AVG. The reverse shows an image of the Emperor standing to the right and holding the hand of Concordia; CONCORDIA MI .... [MILITVM?]; illegible mintmark. The reverse is similar to RIC 215, but a more exact identification is not possible.

AE coin of the third to fourth century AD
Shavards Farm Collection (229)
ID number: E214/23.1999 (RI)
In very worn condition and totally illegible with a diameter of 14–15 mm.

AE radiate coin (AD 270's–280's)
Shavards Farm Collection (no number)
ID number: E214/24.1999 (RI)
In worn condition with a diameter of 14 mm. The obverse has a worn radiate, right-facing bust with an illegible inscription. The reverse shows a crude standing figure possibly of Pax with an illegible inscription.

The Anglo-Saxon Period

The Pottery
Five featureless sherds of middle to late Anglo-Saxon pottery (weighing 17 grams) were recovered during the surface collection. All post-date the seventh century AD and exhibit signs of moderate to heavy abrasion. The majority are made from a flint and sand tempered fabric, but a single sherd in a shell tempered ware is also represented.

A further seven fragments of pottery (weighing 60 grams) were collected during earlier work and all are abraded. These include a single body sherd from a hand-made vessel which could be early Anglo-Saxon. The fabric contains mainly sand and displays characteristics typical of bonfire firing. In the absence of any clue to the vessel form the attribution is somewhat uncertain, particularly as wares of this type are a common component of Iron Age assemblages. The remaining six sherds were found close to the excavated Anglo-Saxon site in the southern part of the field. The earliest are of middle Anglo-Saxon date and consist of two fragments of organically tempered pottery, including a rim. Two further rims, made from a fabric tempered with flint and sand, are middle to late Anglo-Saxon in origin. The latest pottery consists of one rim and one wall sherd, again in a flint and sand tempered fabric, dating to the tenth or eleventh centuries AD.

Metal Detector Finds

Middle to late Anglo-Saxon type

A Hinton Type C double-riveted strap end (Fig. 2.1)
Length: 37 mm, Width: 11 mm, Weight: 2g
Shavards Farm Collection 29
The strap end has been cast in one piece out of copper alloy and is in reasonably good condition. The double rivets of the convex to sub-rectangular shaft are heavily punched and the split captive butt end tapers to a sub-rectangular terminal. The recessed central field is inscribed

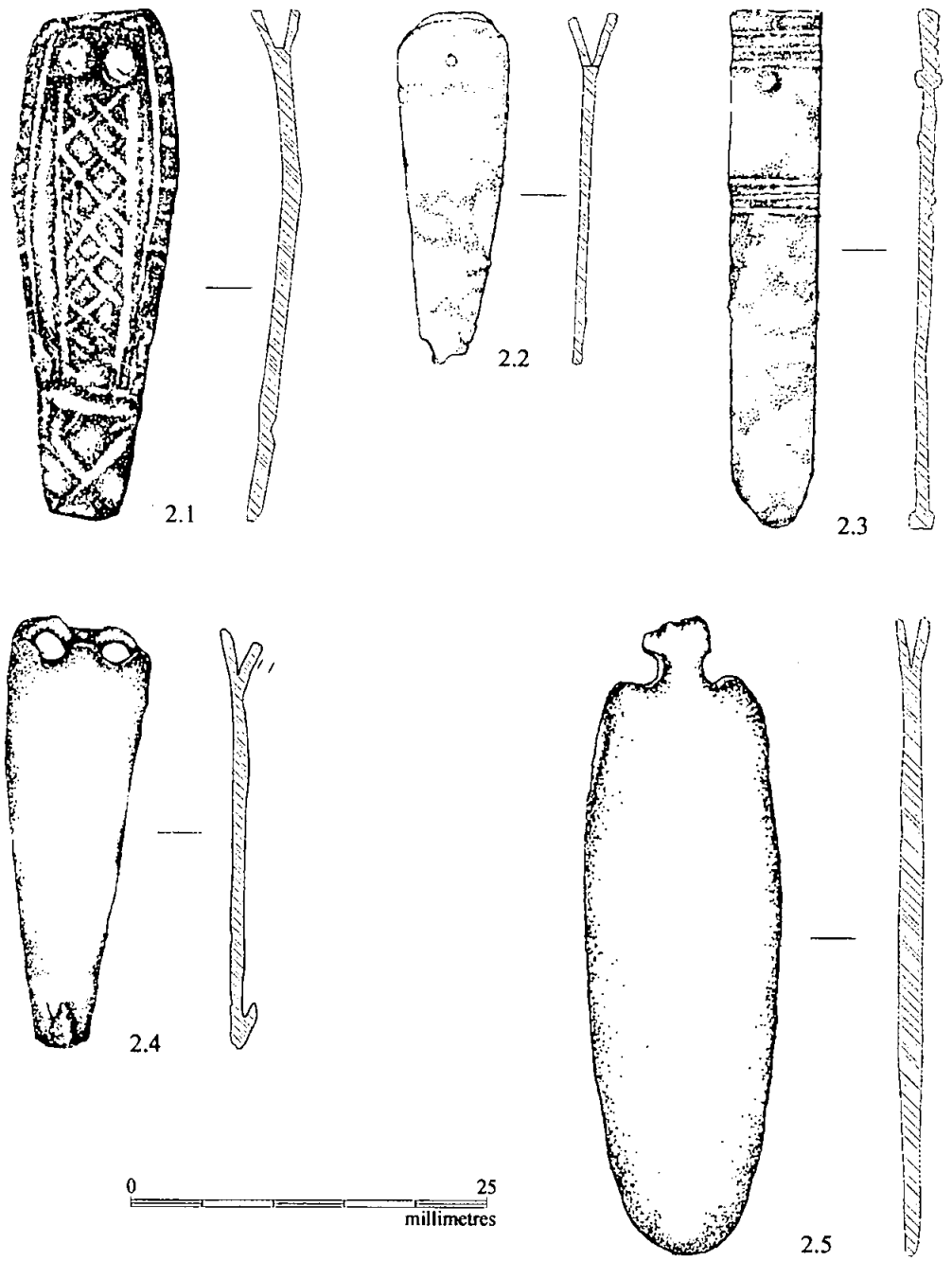

Fig. 2 Anglo-Saxon strap ends

with a lattice design, but is lacking any trace of niello or enamel inlay. The edges of the shaft are crudely scored with a billeted border. The terminal end has an animal mask poorly defined by two heavily incised grooves, possibly defining 'round-ear' motifs. The strap end dates from the ninth-century AD, although the wider type has an eighth to tenth or eleventh century AD date range (Hinton 1990, 502; Webster and Backhouse 1991, fig. 69n, 233; Hinton 1996, 41). Style C strap ends found in Hampshire include examples recovered from Portchester (Hinton and Welch 1976, 216, fig. 136.49 and Pl. XIXc); Hamwic (Hinton 1996, 41–43); Andover (Hinton 1977, 80–81) and Whitchurch (Worrell 2002, 92–93).

Probable middle to late Anglo-Saxon type

A plain, single riveted strap end (Fig. 2.2)
Length: 26 mm, Width: 9 mm, Weight: 1 g
Shavards Farm Collection 32
The convex to tapering strap end has been formed out of two copper alloy thin strip sheets and is in poor condition. The artefact may have been hammered or soldered together with the rivet hole perforation being situated at the division between the shaft and the split captive butt end. The badly abraded shaft probably has a sub rounded terminal that may have been decorated with an animal-mask (Addyman and Hill 1969, fig. 27.4; Webster and Backhouse 1991, fig. 191).

Possible early Anglo-Saxon or Medieval type

An undecorated, trapezoidal and riveted strap end (not illustrated)
Length: 28 mm, Width: 19 mm, Weight: 5g
Shavards Farm Collection 33
The strap end has been formed out of three copper alloy cast plates and is in poor condition, with ferrous corrosion deposits that adhere to the terminal tip. Two outer plates enclose a central plate with space left at the captive end to receive the leather strap. Two substantial headless copper alloy rivets measuring 1.5 mm in diameter unite the plates at the butt and terminal ends. Similar, but narrower, examples have been found at Filkins in Oxfordshire (MacGregor and Bolick 1993, fig. 35.8) and at Lewes in Sussex (Welch 1983, fig. 68d).

Early Anglo-Saxon type

A single tongue-shaped strap end plate or bucket mount fitting (Fig. 2.3)
Length: 36 mm, Width: 6 mm, Weight: 6g
Shavards Farm Collection 36
The cast, copper alloy strap end plate is in poor condition. The wider artefact is formed out of two individually cast plates joined together by two headless copper alloy rivets. The surviving plate is heavily scored with two fields each comprising of three transverse lines. Both fields are situated at either side of a single bronze rivet at the captive end. A second rivet was carefully annealed over and partially obscured by iron corrosion deposits at the tip of the terminal end. Similar strap ends have been excavated from Grave 43, Berinsfield in Oxfordshire (MacGregor and Bolick 1993, fig. 35.4) and Grave 28, Fairford in Gloucestershire (MacGregor and Bolick 1993, fig. 35.7; Wylie 1852, 20). In Hampshire, however, the form is reminiscent of an unstratified pair of bronze mounts and a bucket fitting recovered from Droxford (Aldsworth 1978, fig. 34.44 and fig. 34.49) and a single bucket fitting excavated from Grave 2, Mount Pleasant, Alton (Evison 1988, fig. 23.4).

Middle to late Anglo-Saxon type

A plain, double riveted strap end (Fig. 2.4)
Length: 33 mm, Width: 11 mm, Weight: 2 g
Shavards Farm Collection 38
The convex to slightly tapering strap end is in poor condition. It is made out of two thin copper alloy strip sheets that may have been hammered or soldered together. A single thin strip sheet is slightly damaged at the split-butt captive end. The pointed terminal end is neatly beaten over, indicating that it was reused as a hook tag (Webster and Backhouse 1991, fig. 69q, fig. 248a and fig. 249b-c; Hinton 1990, 502, fig. 126; Hinton 1996, fig. 16, 254/1149). The strap end probably dates from the late ninth or tenth century AD.

Probable middle to late Anglo-Saxon type

A substantial double riveted strap end (Fig. 2.5)
Length: 42 mm, Width: 13 mm, Weight: 5g
Shavards Farm Collection 40
The tongue-shaped strap end has been made out of two cast copper alloy plates and is in reasonably good condition. The two broken double-riveted holes mark the division between the shaft and the split-butt captive end. The convex and broad tongue form has a pronounced sub-rounded section, with its rounded tip possibly indicating a ninth or tenth century AD date (Rogers 1993, 1352, fig. 652.5317 and fig. 652.5319). The broad tongue design may be attributed to later developments within the Hinton Type C series (Hinton 1990, 502 and Hinton1996, 41), while the rounded terminals are characteristic of the Winchester-style strap ends of the tenth century AD and later (Wheeler 1927, fig. 22 and Thomas pers. comm.).

Early Anglo-Saxon type

An iron ferrule from a spear butt, or staff (Fig. 3)
Length: 106 mm, Width: 20 mm.
Shavards Farm Collection 135
The iron ferrule is in poor condition with damage in the area of the socket mouth. No mineralised remains from the wooden shaft were preserved inside the socket. Several spear butt ferrules have been excavated from Anglo-Saxon cemeteries in Hampshire, including examples from Grave 27 at Droxford (Aldsworth 1978, fig. 23; 128 and 164); Grave 2 and Grave 42 at Mount Pleasant, Alton (Evison 1988, 72, fig. 23b, 82 and fig. 35.5b) and Grave 18 at Portway East, Andover (Cook and Dacre 1985, 28, fig. 46.3).

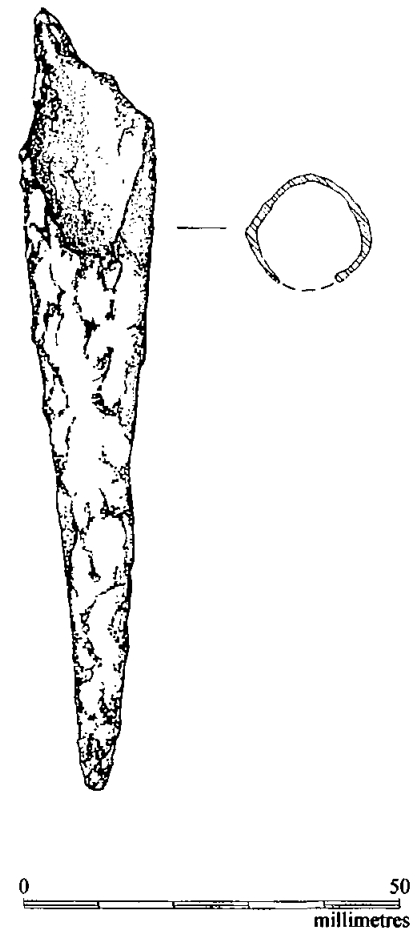

Fig. 3 Iron ferrule

Middle to late Anglo-Saxon type

A Hinton Aa1ii spherical to bi-conical headed pin (not illustrated)
Length: 14 mm, Width: 7 mm
Shavards Farm Collection 175
The plain pin has been cast all in one piece out of copper alloy and is and badly abraded, with the upper end of the swollen shaft terminating in a worn break. A raised collar consisting of three incised lines is present just below the head. The pin is likely to have been a dress accessory, used to secure an outer-garment, and dates between the seventh and ninth centuries AD (Rogers 1993, 1361, fig. 662.5361; Hinton 1996, 14). Type A pins have been excavated from Hamwic (Addyman and Hill 1969, fig. 26.2, 68; Hinton 1996, fig. 7, 32/459, 169/1698 and 258/181), Church Down, Chalton (Champion 1977, 369) and the Cathedral Green, Winchester (Biddle 1990, Nos. 1430, 1434 and 1438).

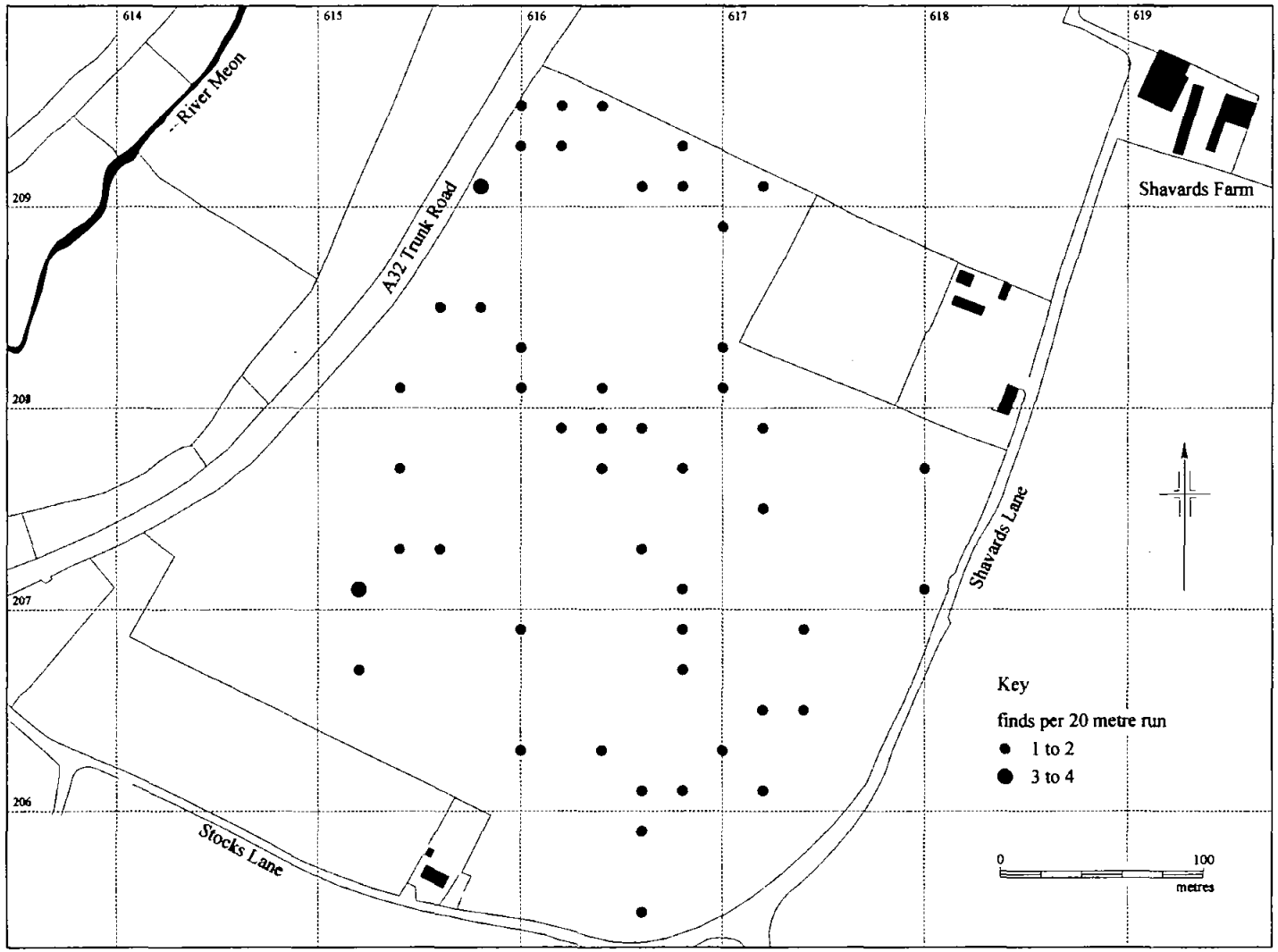

Fig. 4 Distribution of all Roman ceramic finds

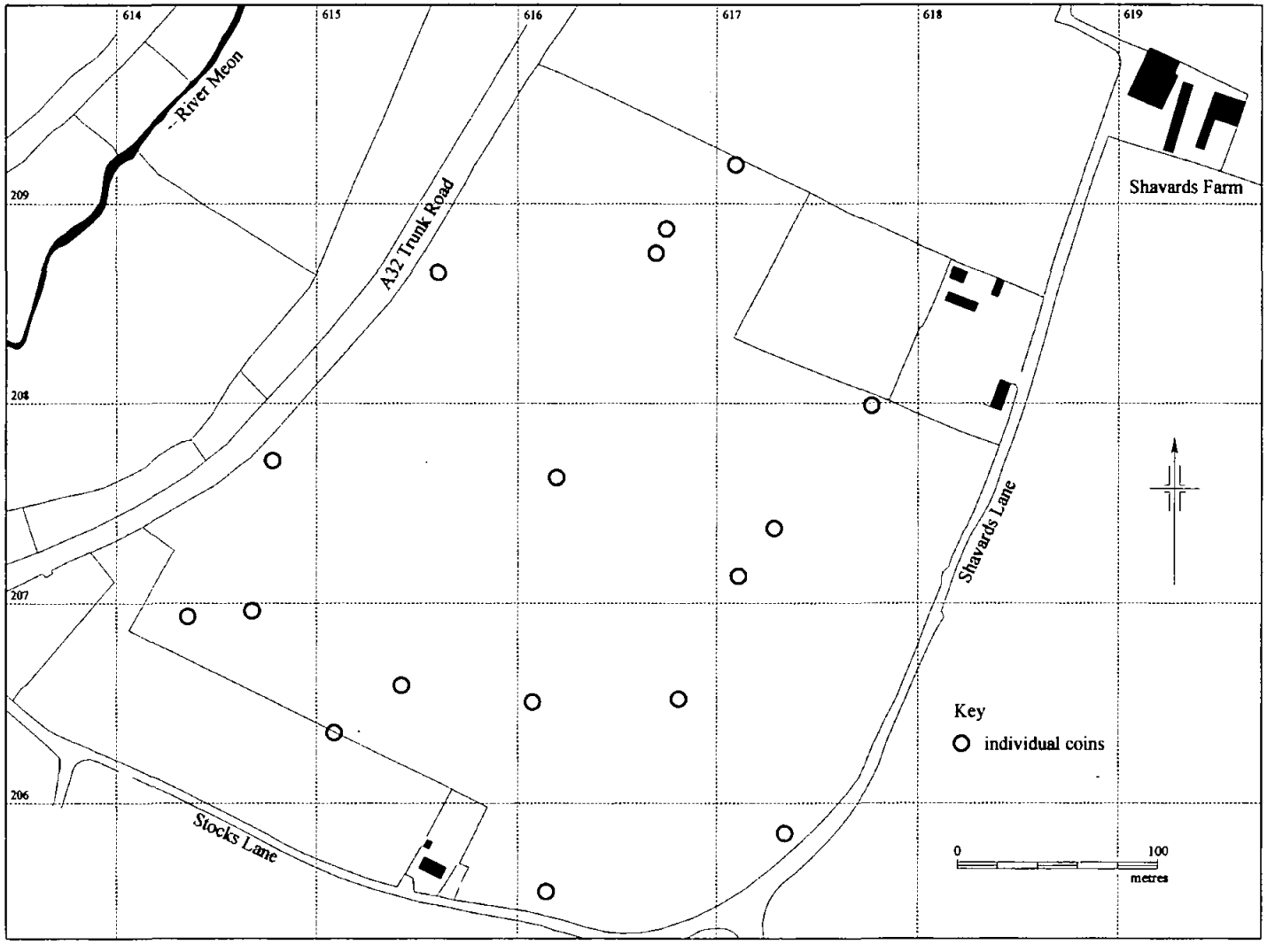

Fig. 5 Distribution of Roman coins

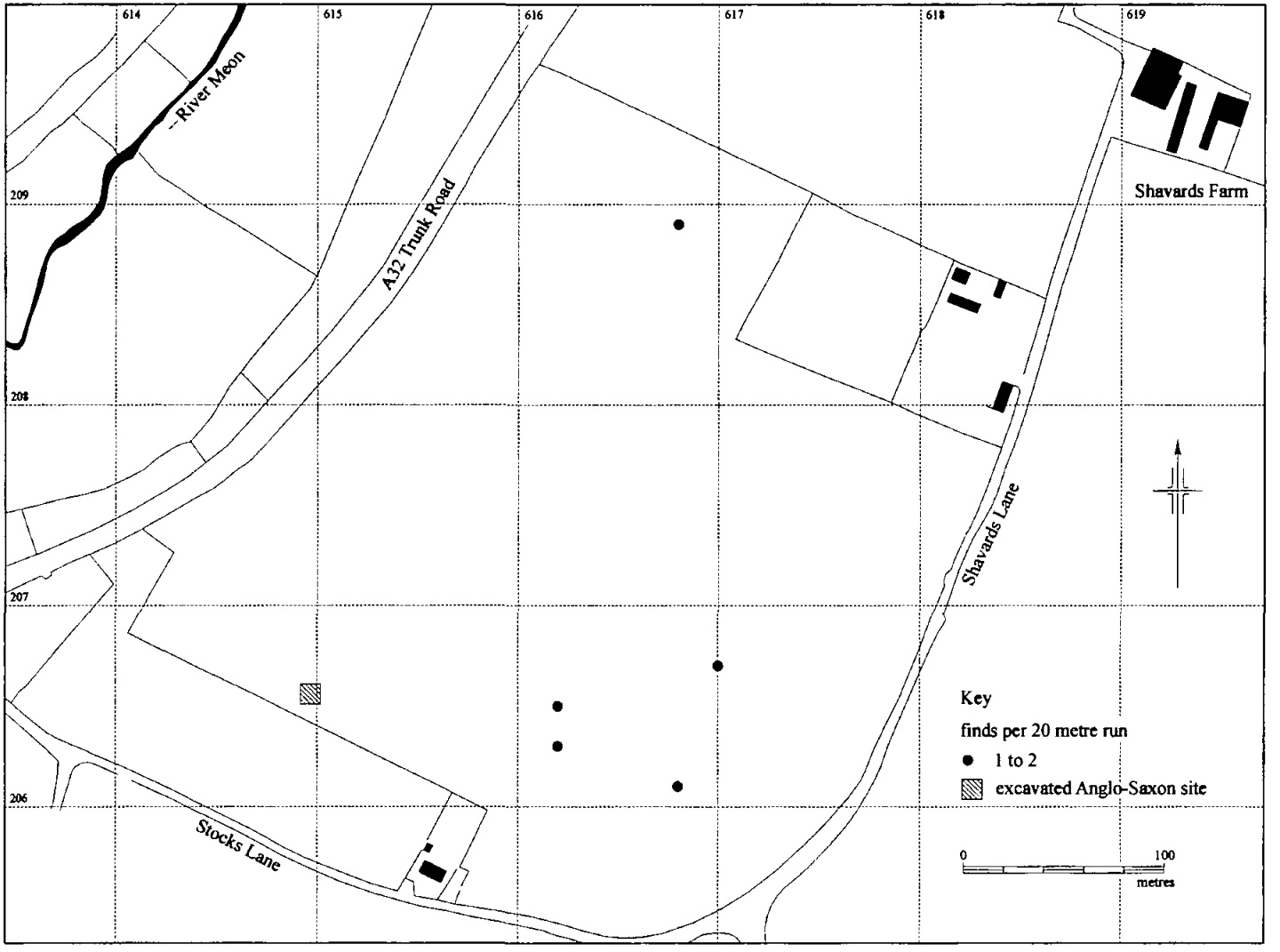

Fig. 6 Distribution of middle to late Anglo-Saxon pottery

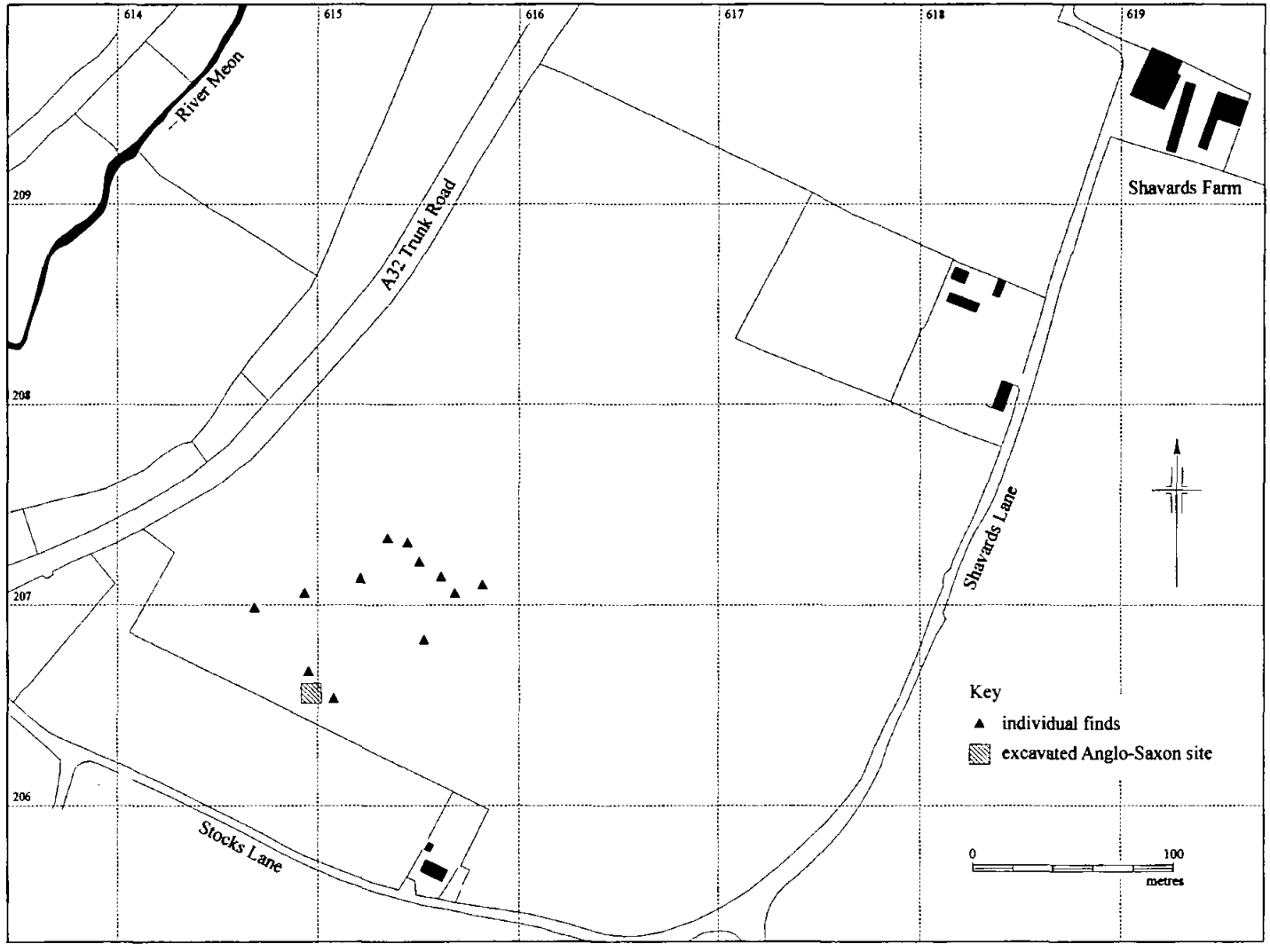

Fig. 7 Distribution of Anglo-Saxon metal finds

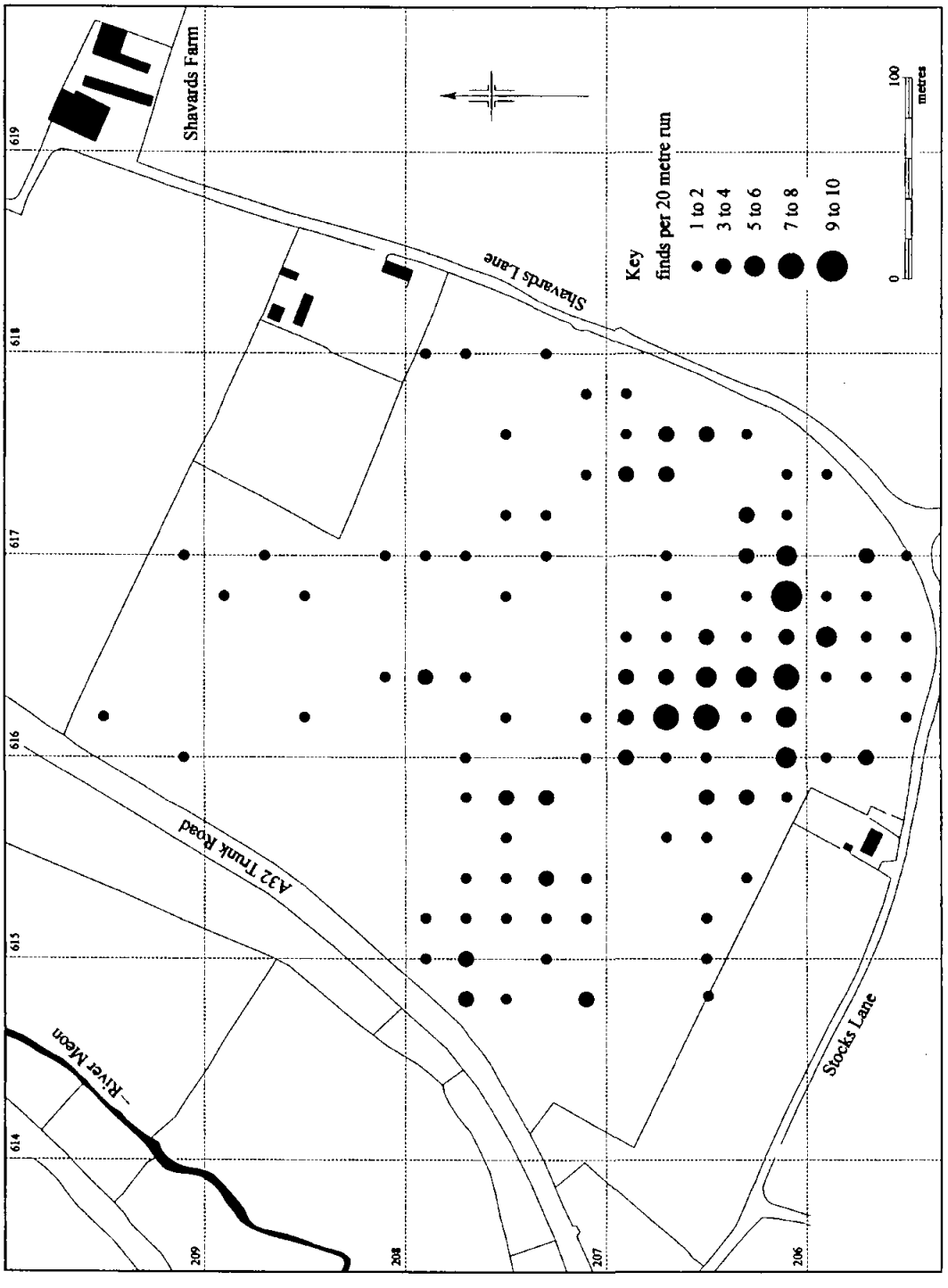

Fig. 8 Distribution of Medieval pottery

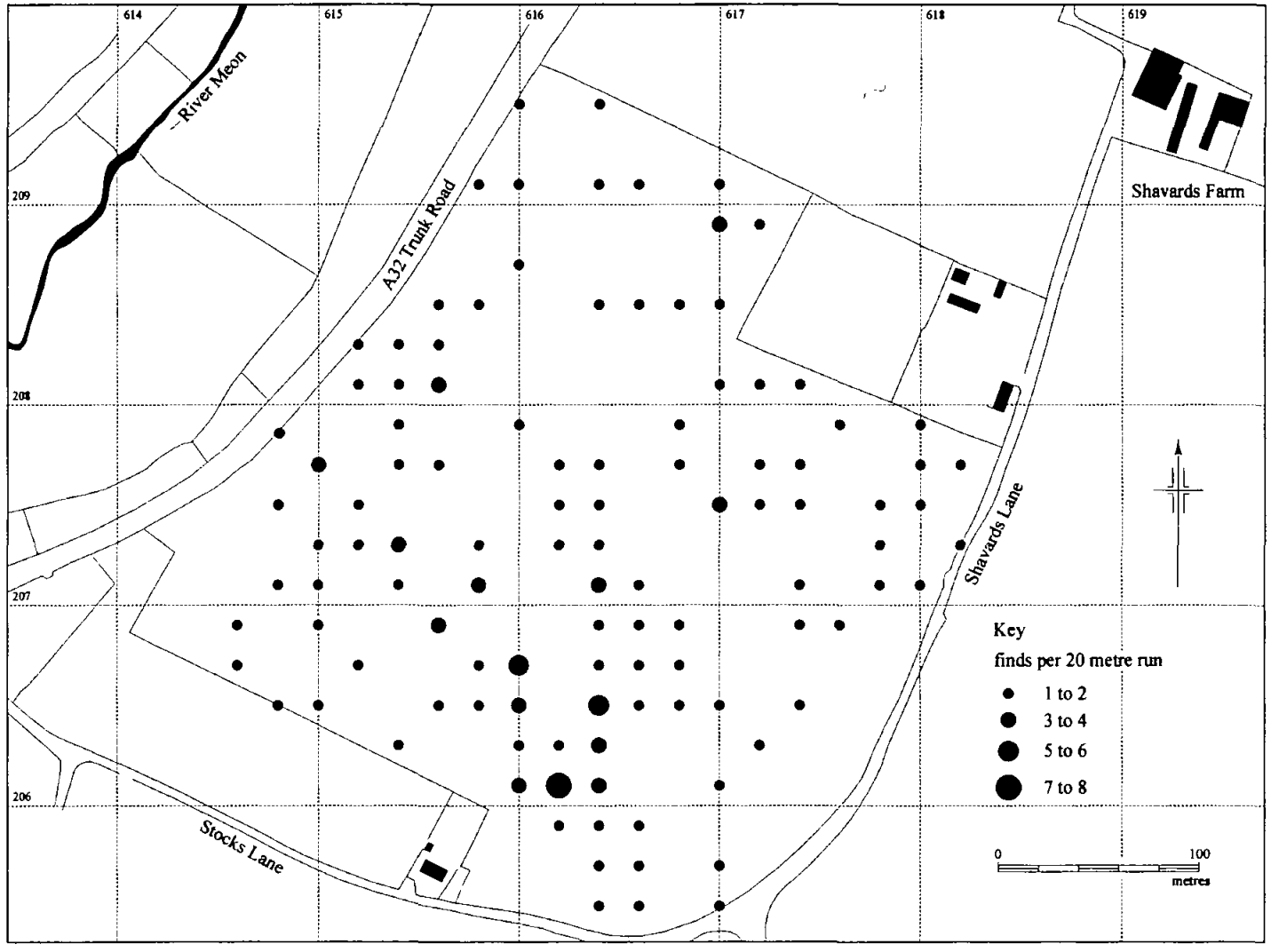

Fig. 9 Distribution of post-Medieval pottery

The Medieval Period

The Pottery

The Medieval assemblage (Fig. 8) is composed of 258 sherds (weighing 801 grams) and includes fragments spanning the entire period between the eleventh and the fifteenth centuries AD. In addition to the surface collection finds there are a further six sherds (weighing 29 grams) from an earlier collection. Without exception the pottery is in poor condition. The sherds are both heavily abraded and of small size, leaving little potential for the reconstruction of vessel form. The character of the assemblage is typical of material scattered on fields during manuring. The assemblage includes seven sherds, weighing 44 grams, made from fabrics with middle to late Saxon origins. One of these wares continued in production into the thirteenth century, while the other two are also known to have been made after the Conquest. The sherds cannot be phased with any degree of precision, but have been included with the Medieval pottery distribution since there is a greater probability that they are of the same date as the bulk of the assemblage. All are derived from the southern and central parts of the field.

Apart from one sherd of Scratch Ware (weighing one gram) made during the eleventh or twelfth century AD, from the southern part of the field, the rest of the Medieval ceramics date between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries AD.

Sand is the predominant inclusion in all nineteen Medieval wares and five also contain sparse quantities of flint. Nine of the fabrics include particles of very fine mica, mostly in sparse amounts, although higher concentrations (15–20%) are found in three of the wares. Approximately 25% of the sherds recovered during the surface collection are made from one of these three fabrics. Although the origin of these wares is uncertain, it is probable that the mica is derived from relatively local secondary clays (Duncan Brown pers. comm.). The diagnostic sherds indicate that these sources were being exploited over a long period of time between the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries AD.

The Post-Medieval Period

The Pottery

A total of 174 sherds (weighing 1,522 grams) of post-Medieval pottery were recovered by surface collection (Fig. 9). The largest single category is composed of Hampshire Red Wares, dating between the late sixteenth and nineteenth centuries AD. Together these wares comprise 56% of the assemblage (97 sherds, weighing 906 grams) and are distributed across the entire field.

Examples of Surrey/Hampshire Border Ware (two sherds, weighing four grams), Verwood Ware (10 sherds, weighing 102 grams) and Sussex Red Earthenwares (two sherds, weighing 10 grams) were also recovered. The diagnostic sherds of Surrey/Hampshire Border Ware and Verwood Ware date between the seventeenth and eighteenth century AD, while the Sussex Red Earthenwares are of nineteenth century date.

Apart from a number of miscellaneous earthenwares of uncertain origin, the remainder of the post-Medieval pottery includes salt glazed stoneware, white glazed porcelain and flowerpot fragments.

Other Surface Collection Finds

Worked Flint

Sixty-one pieces of worked flint, weighing 2,016 grams, and 127 pieces of burnt flint, weighing 994 grams were recovered during the surface collection. There were no marked clusters in the distribution of either class of material. Most of the worked material consists of flint knapping debris, including cores and waste flakes. Only four implements are represented, including a scraper, two notched tools and a utilised flake.

Stone and roofing slate

Twenty pieces of stone (weighing 2,559 grams) and 12 fragments of slate (weighing 116 grams) were found during the fieldwork. Approximately 50% of the stone has been worked or utilised, but none of this material can be dated accurately.

The worked stone includes four roof tile fragments from the central and northern part of the field; three quern fragments from the southern area (weighing 529 grams), part of a honestone

(weighing 118 grams), a piece of burnt shaped stone with a radial groove, which may be part of a quern (weighing 560 grams), a possible honestone (44 weighing grams), and one other piece of shaped stone of unknown use (weighing 164 grams).

The roof tiles are made exclusively from fossiliferous limestone, while two of the quern fragments, the honestone and the possible burnt quern fragment are made from coarse sandstone. The third quern is made from a coarse, strongly-cemented gritstone, which was also used for the piece of shaped stone of indeterminate use. The possible honestone, together with three water-worn pebbles are of ferruginous sandstone, most likely derived locally from fluvial gravels in the Meon Valley.

Glass, Clay Pipes and Ceramic Building Material

Twenty-five pieces of post-Medieval bottle and window glass (weighing 274 grams) were recovered. Four unmarked clay pipe stems (weighing nine grams) were also found. The assemblage of ceramic building material comprised 342 pieces of roofing tile (weighing 11,994 grams) and 376 brick fragments (weighing 9,945 grams).

The iron objects

Most of the iron objects found during the surface collection are nails. These include eight hand-made nails of indeterminate date and one cut nail likely to have been made during the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries AD. The remaining two objects include a possible ferrule and a fragment of folded sheet iron.

In addition sixteen pieces of iron slag (weighing 1,586 grams) were recovered. The slag was mostly found in the southern and central part of the field. The only exception came from the area close to the northern fence-line. It is possible that the slag was derived from the Anglo-Saxon settlement, where traces of iron working were found during the excavation (H.C.C. 1986). The distribution, however, extends over five hectares and shows no obvious spatial relationship to the Anglo-Saxon site.

Animal bone and oyster shell

Ten fragments of animal bone were recovered during the surface collection. The fragments are of indeterminate date and were scattered at random across the field.

Ninety-seven pieces of oyster shell (weighing 584 grams) were also found. These were heavily abraded, with the majority of fragments weighing less than 10 grams. Although the distribution extended across the entire field, there was a tendency for it to concentrate in the southern and central area. This is reminiscent of the patterning displayed by the Medieval pottery and to a lesser extent by the post-Medieval ceramics.

DISTRIBUTION PATTERNS

Late Iron Age and Roman Finds

The low ceramic finds numbers (Fig. 4) allow for little more than a general comment on the distribution of ceramic finds. Clearly, such a diffuse spread of material is not indicative of settlement. It is, however, fairly typical of the low-level distributions usually interpreted as evidence for the use of domestic and farm waste to improve soil fertility, a practice already well established by the Roman period (Fowler 1981, 249).

The Roman coin distribution is similarly unstructured (Fig. 5), giving the impression of items lost by chance in the field itself, or scattered across the field with manure brought from the nearby Roman site. The two perforated coins may have been reused as ornamental items during the Anglo-Saxon period and subsequently lost.

Anglo-Saxon Finds

The pottery assemblage consists entirely of middle to late Anglo-Saxon sherds, but these are too few in number for detailed comment (Fig. 6). It is worth noting, however, that the survival of such low-fired fabrics is greatly reduced in arable land, especially where they have been exposed to repeated episodes of ploughing over an extended period.

The metalwork distribution forms a relatively coherent pattern, with the main concentration occurring in the vicinity of the excavated Anglo-Saxon settlement (Fig. 7). The majority of finds form an arc to the north of the excavation site, and downslope from the principal area of settlement. In part this distribution pattern is probably the result of soil erosion from the chalk

plateau which occupies the southern end of the field (Hughes 1985 and 1986; Stedman and Stoodley forthcoming).

Medieval and Post-Medieval Finds

Although the assemblage of Medieval sherds recovered during the field-walking spans the entire period, the majority are from vessels with dates between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries AD. The distribution is skewed towards the southern end of the field (Fig. 8) and probably represent debris from manuring in the fields associated with the manorial site at Exton. This lies on the opposite side of the River Meon which is crossed by two adjacent river fords.

The distribution of post-Medieval pottery is more diffuse (Fig. 9), although there is a slight trend towards higher concentrations at the southern end of the field. Again this almost certainly reflects manuring practices across arable fields close to the present village.

CONCLUSION

Any interpretation of the field-walking results for the Roman and Anglo-Saxon periods is greatly hindered by the small number of finds recovered. With regard to the pottery this may be the outcome of differential destruction by ploughing and weathering, particularly of the low-fired Anglo-Saxon fabrics. Soil variation is another factor which is likely to have skewed the distribution patterns. It is possible that deeper colluvial soils towards the northern edge of the field have masked earlier deposits, giving a false impression of lower finds numbers. The effect of post-depositional processes is impossible to quantify, but the intensity of arable cultivation indicated by the concentrations of Medieval and later pottery undoubtedly has had a major influence on the distribution patterns.

Despite uncertainties over the quality of the results some general observations can be made. The distribution and density of Roman pottery is entirely consistent with the practice of infield manuring commonly recorded at other sites of the period. The surface collection area almost certainly formed part of a field system, probably originating during the Iron Age and continuing in use throughout the Roman period. Between the first and fourth centuries AD the principal settlement appears to have been centred on the Roman building (Fig. 1), with much of the surrounding land being utilised as arable or pasture. During the early Anglo-Saxon period some elements of the field system may have continued in use, but from the middle Anglo-Saxon period the focus of settlement shifted to a site on the higher ground at the southern end of the surface collection field (Fig. 1, 2).

At various times between the Medieval period and the present day the surface collection field has been under cultivation, and this is reflected by the pottery distributions and the abraded character of the material. Together these provide some insight into the intensity of the arable episodes and their differential impact on the survival of ceramic finds from the earlier periods.

ARCHIVE

The archive is currently held by Berkshire Archaeological Services prior to deposition with the Hampshire Museums Service (Accession No. A.1998.14).

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