

Chapel Archaeology CIC

Archaeological Fieldwork Report

Shocklach: Brickiln Field

For Community Interest

May, 2017

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Client	Community benefit/interest
Location	NGR SJ 43200 50400 (343200 350400)
Site Code	SHK/BKF
Author(s)	R. J. Carpenter
Doc. Ref.	D:\Shocklach\Bricklin_field\Shifted\BKF_Report_Final.vp
Date	19 May 2017

Chapel Archaeology CIC

143, Hough Green, CHESTER, CH4 8JR. 07426 92 44 93.

postmaster@chapelarchaeology.co.uk.

www.chapelarchaeology.co.uk

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1. Introduction

The whole of the area around St Edith's church and the postulated twin castles at Shocklach[1] is an historic landscape of great interest. Chapel Archaeology (CA), with the local residents, is investigating many of the features and anomalies of that landscape. The land between St. Edith's and the postulated motte and bailey castle is of particular interest as it may be the location of a deserted medieval village[2] (and thus partly explain the current isolated position of St. Edith's) and is the only realistic candidate for the site of the bailey.

During the spring of 2016, CA gained permission from both the landowner and the tenant farmer to undertake a field-walking exercise. This report records that exercise.

2. Site Location

An aerial image of the site is shown in Figure 1. St. Edith's church is in the centre at the bottom of the picture and the motte and bailey is in the woods at the woods at the top. Overlaid onto the aerial image is the boundary of the relevant field (Brickiln Field) from the 1839 tithe map[3] and the field-walking grid.



Figure 1: Aerial image (© Microsoft 2017) with the tithe map field boundary and field-walking cells.



Figure 2: The area on the day of field-walking.

The field-walking grid was set out by traditional tape and cane methods as 20m by 20m cells. Due to the field boundaries, cells 3, 4 and 10 were not squares. This will have a minor impact on the distribution plots as detailed below.

The field-walking exercise was carried out on 6th May 2016. The weather was warm (max. 20°C) and dry. The field had previously been ploughed, harrowed, seeded and rolled. The crop had started to germinate but was largely still invisible. Figure 2 shows the area on the day.

3. Mapping Data

The mapping data for the distribution plots comes from three different sources. The 'base' map (roads, water, woods and such like) comes from the Ordnance Survey open mapping data[4]. We fully acknowledge that the plots contain OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2017. The outline of Brickiln Field comes from tracing the appropriate boundary from our own geo-referenced version of the 1839 tithe map. The field-walking grid's position was recorded by hand-held GPS equipment.

The distribution plots show the amount of material found in each square of the field-walking grid. For reference, each cell has an identification number shown in its lower left. The legend identifies the symbol that gives details of the precise material and its quantity. The area of the symbol represents the amount found, not its linear dimensions. The quantities are not recorded on a linear scale but on one that (approximately) doubles for each step, that is, a 1, 2, 5 progression. Where the cell is not square (cells 3, 4 and 10) the position of the symbol representing the material may not be contained within the true boundaries but rather the boundaries as if the cell had been square.

4. Raw Results

The team worked in pairs and all non-natural materials were gathered from the surface by hand without any form of excavation.

An initial sort of the finds removed any obviously spurious material, such as sweet wrappers and the like. The remaining material was sorted into the following eleven categories:

Bone
Brick/Tile
Ceramics
Chert[i]
Coal
Glass
Kiln Waste
Metal
Worked Stone
Slag
Slate

Only one of those classes (ceramics) can be analysed further and we will return to it later. The other quantities of the other classes may be plotted against the location of their discovery. Ten individual, in some cases rather sparse, plots would be dull so they have been combined into groups of related materials.

Building materials:
Brick/tile
Slate
Worked stone
Industrials:
Coal
Slag
Kiln waste
Other:
Bone
Chert
Glass
Metal

These three combinations are shown in Figures 3, 4 and 5.

i Chert is a hard, dark, opaque rock composed of silica. It was used instead of flint in the Stone Age where flint is not naturally available.

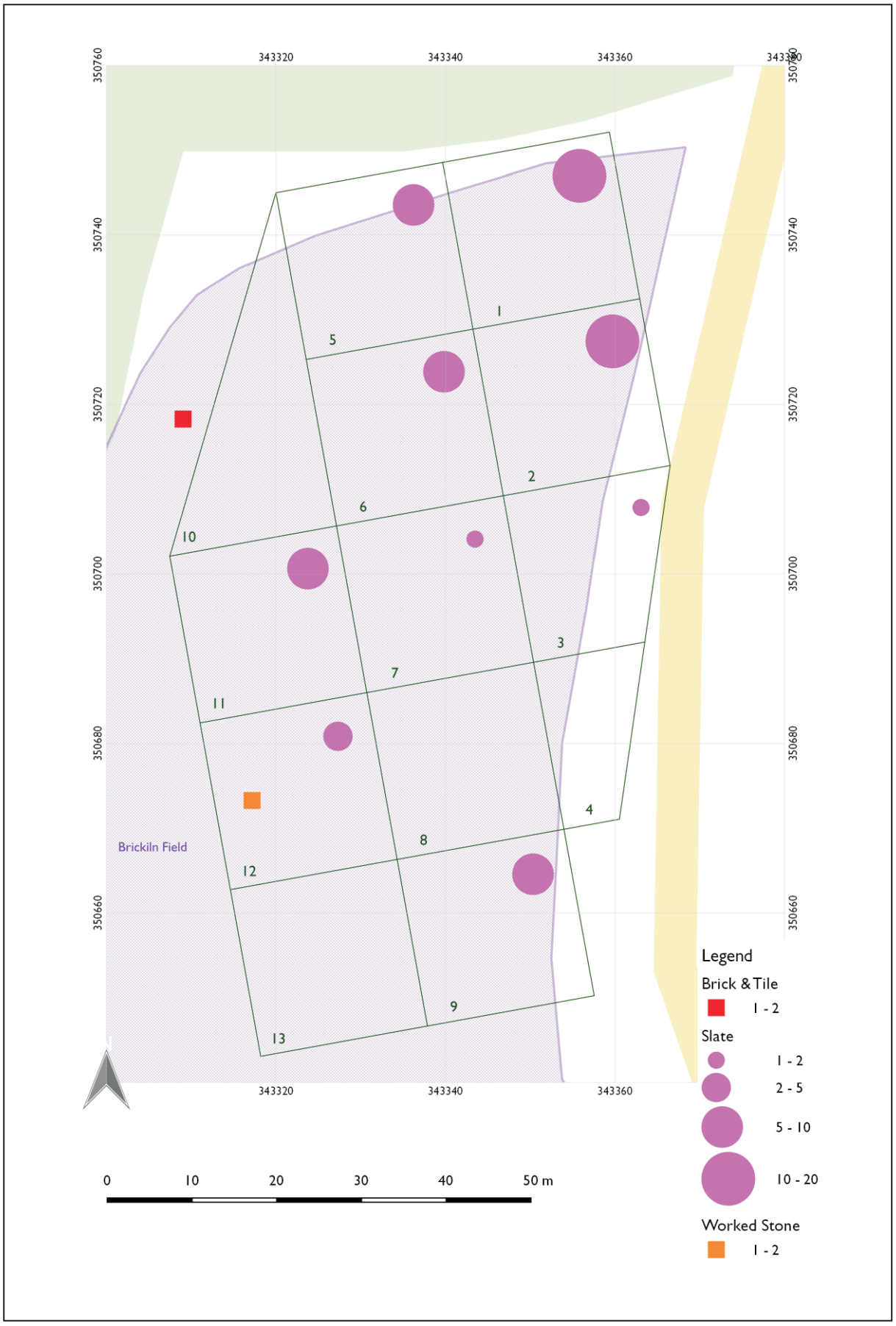


Figure 3: Distribution of building materials.

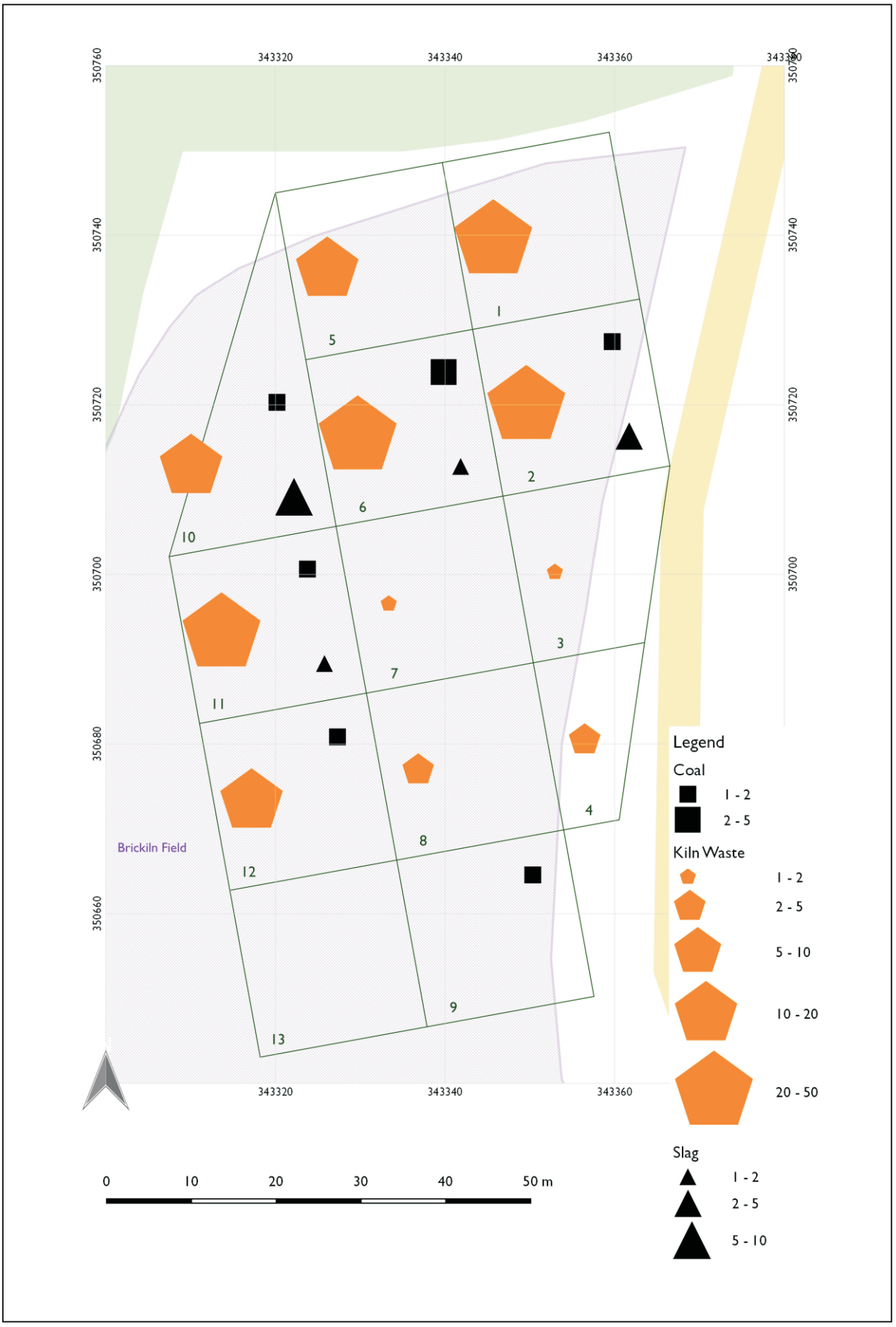


Figure 4: Distribution of industrial materials.

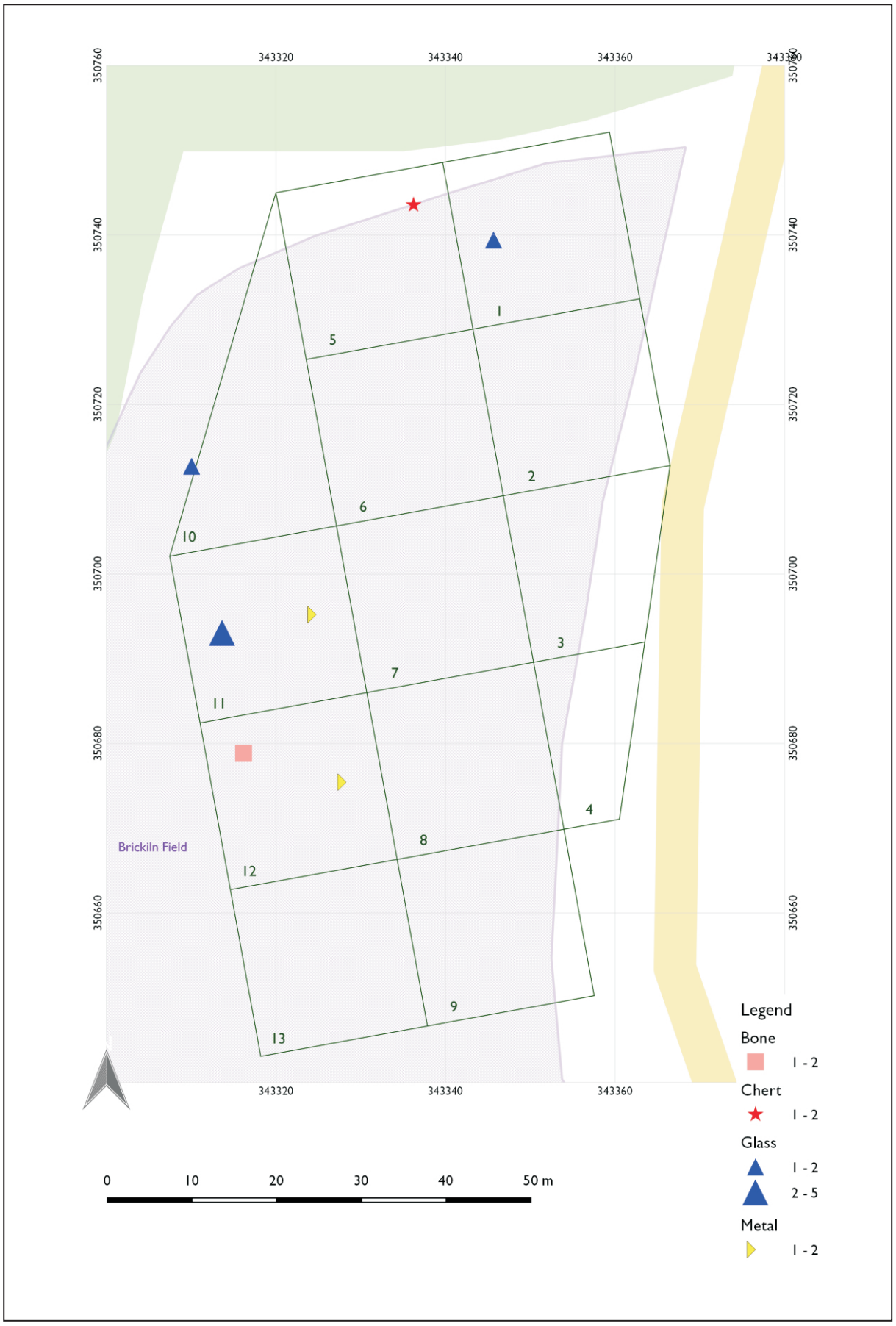


Figure 5: Distribution of other materials.

4.1 Ceramics

Ceramics (pottery) are much studied, analysed and recorded. This allows quite small sherds to provide quite detailed information on age and source.

The ceramics collected were initially sorted into five periods:

- Roman
- Medieval
- Post-Medieval
- Modern
- Undated

The distribution plot for these age categories is shown in Figure 6. For three of the age categories, we were able to further sub-divide them.

4.1.1 Roman

Figure 7 shows the distribution of Roman pottery broken down into four classes:

- Black burnished ware
- Holt ware
- Samian
- Undefined Roman

4.1.2 Post-medieval

Figure 8 shows the distribution of the three types of post-medieval pottery identified:

- Buckley ware
- 17th century
- 18th/19th century

4.1.3 Modern

Figure 9 shows the distribution of the three types of modern pottery classified:

- 19th century
- 19th/20th century
- 20th century

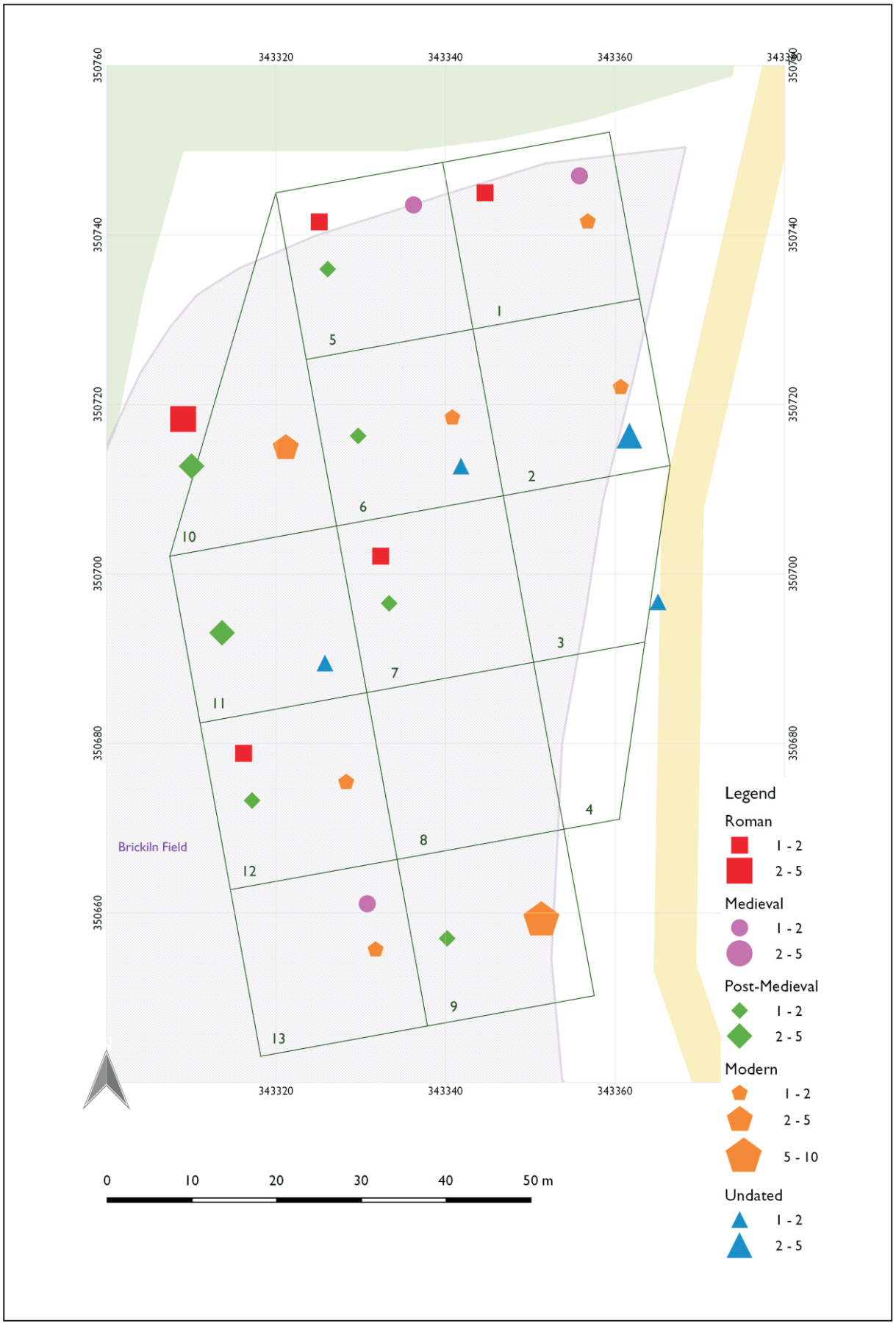


Figure 6: Distribution of ceramics by period.

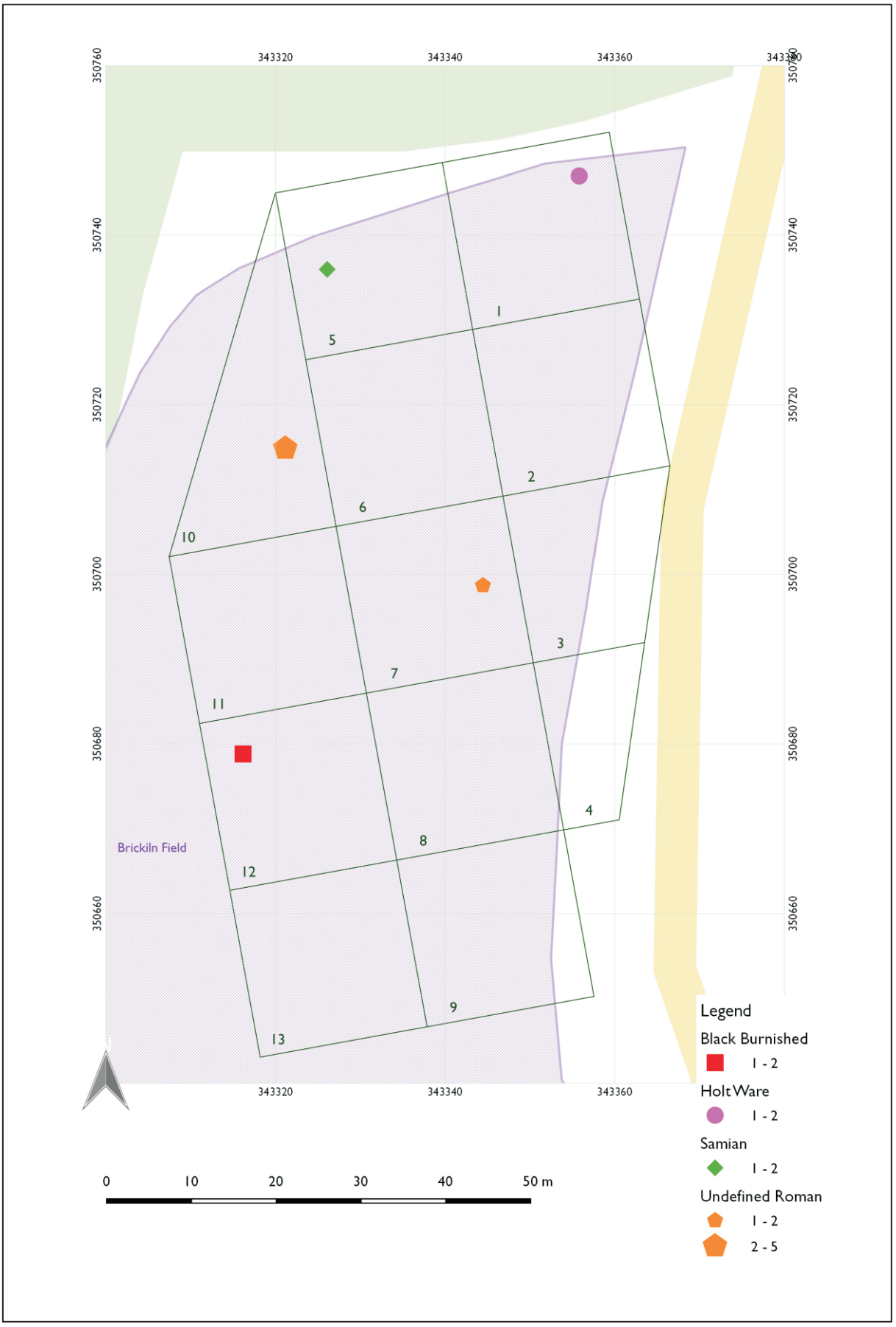


Figure 7: Distribution of Roman ceramics.

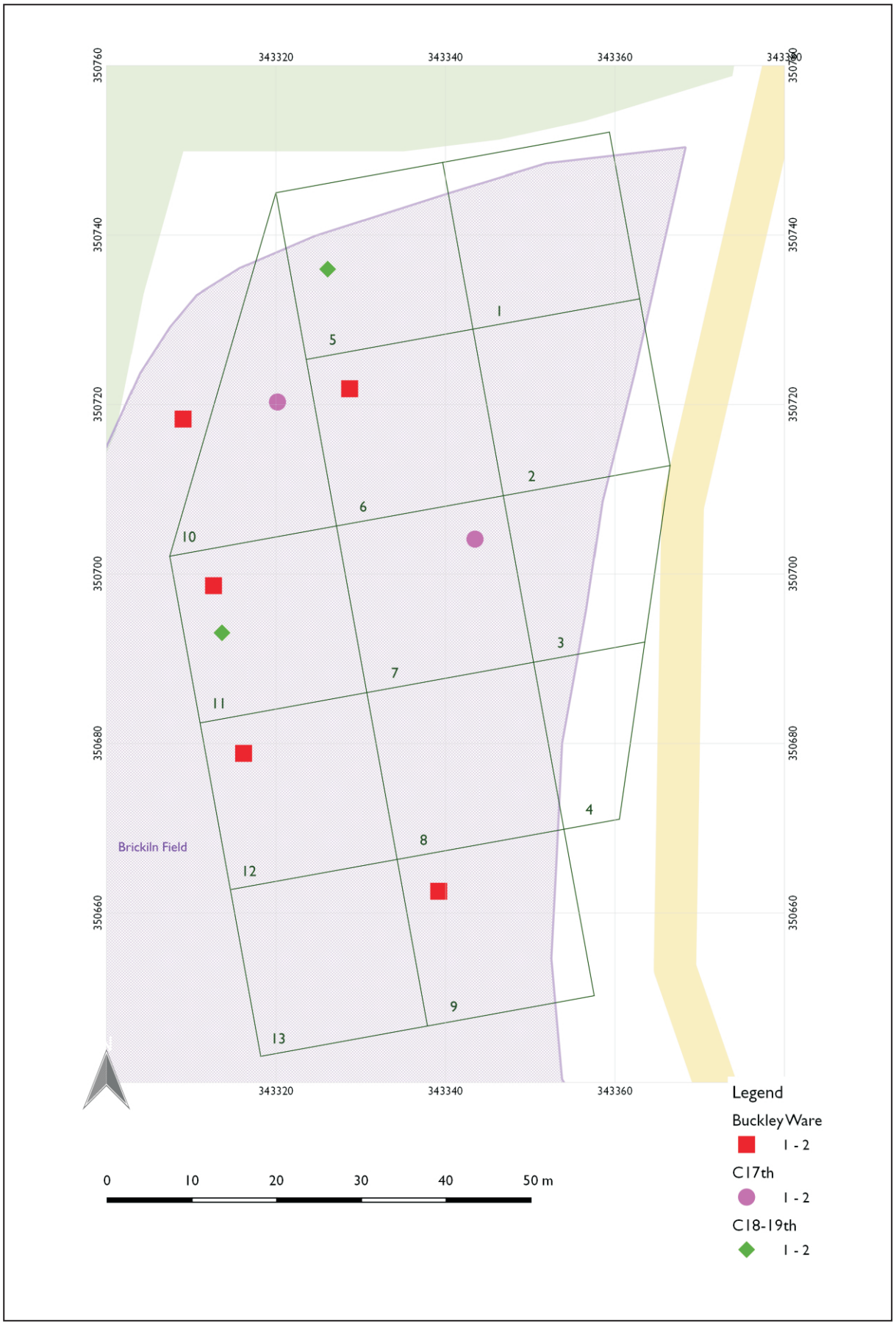


Figure 8: Distribution of post-medieval ceramics.

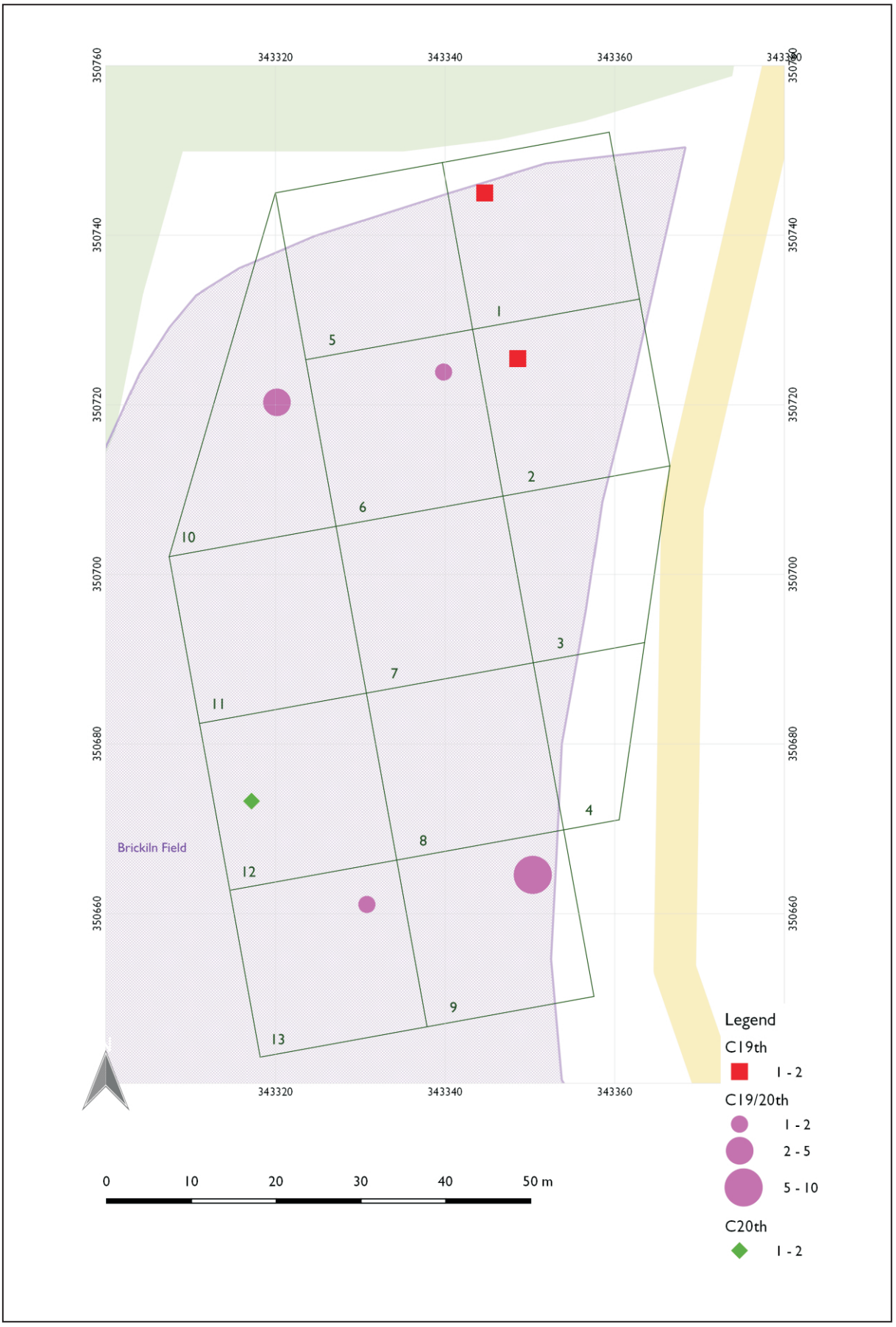


Figure 9: Distribution of modern ceramics.

5. Discussion

5.1 Non-ceramic materials

The initial distribution of the various materials is of mixed significance. For the building materials (Figure 3), there are substantial quantities of slate but a paucity of other building materials (brick or stone). This is confusing as slate is normally considered to be a building material, as either roofing or 'shimming' in stone wall construction. There does not appear to be enough brick or stone residue to justify the amount of slate found.

The position is much clearer for the industrial materials that confirm Brickiln Field lives up to its name. There are major quantities of coal, kiln waste and slag, particularly in the north and east of the area, indicating the previous existence of brick kilns.

There are only small quantities of other materials suggesting these are just random deposits without significance.

5.2 Ceramics

It may just be an accident of the analysis but no cell contains ceramics from more than three time periods. It is also noticeable that the finds are clustered in the northern and eastern cells. This may have an underlying cause not yet identified. Suggestions include a track or pathway leading from the motte (and bailey?) down to the church.

A modest amount of Roman pottery does suggest their earlier presence. With the closeness of the stream crossing and the earlier (natural?) precursor of the motte, this is a strategic location and the Roman presence should not be surprising. Likewise the medieval pottery suggests that this is might be the area of the Norman bailey.

The later pieces of pottery may be of lesser significance in that they could have deposited here by the use of 'night soil' from neighbouring towns. On the other hand, it is only modern pottery that seems to not have a distribution biased towards the north and east of the site.

6. References

1 http://www.academia.edu/4577267/Two_for_One_The_Archaeological_Surey_of_Shocklach_Castle_Cheshire_in_Cheshire_History_Journal_No._53_2013-4._Cheshire_Local_History_Association_2013_

2 https://www.dmv.hull.ac.uk/dmvDetail.cfm?dbkey=2971&county=true

3 http://maps.cheshire.gov.uk/tithemaps/TwinMaps.aspx?township=EDT_355-2

4 https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/business-and-government/help-and-support/products/opendata-getting-started.html