

**A fieldwalking evaluation at
Abbott's Hall Farm,
Great Wigborough, Essex**

October 2000

**on behalf of
Essex Wildlife Trust**

CAT Report 105

COLCHESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST



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CAT Report 105

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A fieldwalking evaluation at Abbotts Hall Farm, Great Wigborough, Essex: October 2000

1 Summary

An area of 4.76 hectares was fieldwalked in advance of the construction of a freshwater lake. There were a number of prehistoric and Roman finds, including a significant cluster of prehistoric burnt flints which represent a previously unknown prehistoric 'site'.

2 Introduction

This is the report on an evaluation by fieldwalking survey at Abbott's Hall Farm, Great Wigborough, Essex, commissioned by the Essex Wildlife Trust and carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust on 18th October 2000. Post-excavation work was carried out from 19th-26th October 2000. Current land use is arable. NGR for the site centre is at TL 270 140. This report mirrors standards and practices contained in Colchester Borough Council's *Guidelines for the standards and practice of archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester*.

3 Archaeological background

There have been several archaeological discoveries in the vicinity of the development area. Both south and east of the development area, Roman pottery and late Iron Age and Roman red hills (salt-working sites) are recorded (ESMR 11512, 16702, 17068). These are discussed in Fawn *et al* 1990 and Sealey 1995.

4 Aim

The aim of the survey was to collect and plot surface finds in order to establish whether there are any significant clusters of surface finds which might highlight the position of previously unknown archaeological sites.

5 Method

The survey was a 10% surface collection achieved by collecting finds in 2-metre corridors over a 20-metre grid. Two base pegs were established to give an east-west line, from which north-south walk lines were established and marked with ranging rods. Each individual find (or group of finds) was bagged up and numbered sequentially 1 to 110, and the location of each bag was plotted using a total station (EDM). This allowed rapid collection and accurate plotting.

6 Plotting

Statistical analysis is easier to carry out when the finds are arranged in a 20-metre grid. In order to achieve this, the finds were plotted at scale in the positions established with the EDM, and a 20-metre grid superimposed on the drawing. This allowed a simple transfer of finds bags to box numbers. The boxes in the grid were numbered as follows: the survey area was split into three adjacent 200-metre square boxes - **A**, **B**, **C** (with **B** lying east of **A**, and **C** lying north of **A** (Figs 2-8) Each 200-metre box contained one hundred 20-metre collection units numbered in such a way that box 1 was in the bottom left of each box (south-west corner) and box 100 at top right (north-east). This numbering mirrors the north-south collection lines of the original fieldwalking. The shape of the survey area was such that none of the 200-metre boxes were complete: A contained 93 boxes, B 2, and C 24.

7 Results

The following types of finds were collected: prehistoric flints, burnt flints, Roman pottery, Roman brick/tile, medieval pottery, post-medieval and modern pottery, clay tobacco pipe, peg tile, post-medieval and modern brick, fragments of field drains, post-medieval and modern glass, and sundry iron objects. Full details of the analysis of these finds is given in section 13. The first six of those finds groups are discussed below, and statistical analysis is given in section 13. The other finds groups are listed in the site archive, but are not discussed below.

Using the spreadsheet facility in Microsoft Works, each finds type has been calculated in such a way that the period plans (Figs 2-8) show groups of finds in below average (-average) above average (+average), above 1 standard deviation over the mean (+1 SD) and above 2 SDs above the norm (+2 SD). By common convention in the Essex fieldwalking system, a single box with finds of +2 SD is not a significant cluster, but two such adjacent boxes are a significant cluster and represent a previously unknown 'archaeological site'.

7.1 Prehistoric finds (Figs 2, 3)

Two classes of prehistoric material were collected: struck flints and burnt flints.

7.1.1 Struck flints

total collected: 3
ave wt per 20m box: 0.039g
County average: 0.245g

There were only three struck flints from this survey (total weight 4.6g), which is a surprisingly low figure. A much larger number of flints were originally collected, but after examination most were rejected as not humanly worked. This at least proves that the collectors were not 'flint blind'. The low number of pieces makes the standard deviation plotting unreliable (Fig 2); the apparent concentration in box A46 is a single 4 gramme piece.

7.1.2 Burnt flints

total collected: 19
ave wt per 20m box: 2.706g
County average: 2.439g

Nineteen burnt flints were collected (total weight 322g) at approximately the County average¹. This is a much larger group of material than the struck flints, and one on which statistical analysis can confidently be carried out. The material is fairly strongly grouped in the south-west part of the survey area. Five boxes have above 2 standard deviation groups, and three of these are adjacent boxes (A14, A23, A24). This group of adjacent boxes is statistically a previously unknown prehistoric site (the only one revealed by this survey).

7.2 Roman finds (Figs 4, 5)

Two classes of Roman material were collected - pottery and brick/tile

7.2.1 Roman pottery

total collected: 5
ave wt per 20m box: 0.151g
County average: 0.842g

Five sherds of Roman pottery were collected, at an average weight well below the County figure. They show a slight tendency to gather in the south-west part of the survey area (along with the burnt flint), but there are no significant clusters of this material. All the finds appear as above 2 SD, but this is a product of the low weight of finds, and is not significant.

7.2.2 Roman brick/tile

total collected: 6
ave wt per 20m box: 1.857g
County average: 4.524g²

As with the Roman pottery, the weight of Roman brick/tile is low. There are no significant groups, and the material is found generally all over the southern half of the survey area.

7.3 Medieval finds (Fig 6)

One class of medieval find was collected - pottery

7.3.1 Medieval pottery

total collected: 1
ave wt per 20m box: 0.050g
County average: 1.447g

A single medieval sherd was collected. No comments can be made about such a small group.

7.4 Post-medieval and modern finds (Figs 7-8)

A number of classes of post-medieval and modern material were collected: pottery, tile, clay pipe, glass. Only pottery and tile are discussed below. Details of others are in the site archive.

¹ as given in Medlycott and Germany 1994
² tile weight only

7.4.1 Post-medieval and modern pottery

total collected: 134
ave wt per 20m box: 8.546g
County average: 4.363g

A large group of post-medieval and modern pottery was collected, at approximately double the County figure. The material is spread over most of the southern two thirds of the survey area, but (in contrast to the prehistoric and Roman material) it has a marked concentration in the eastern half of the survey area, with a much lighter spread to the west. It is conventional wisdom to interpret this post-medieval and modern pottery as 'manure scatter' material (brought out with the farmyard manure and spread onto the fields by accident), rather than derived from below-ground archaeological sites. There is no reason to dispute this idea here. Because the material is manure scatter, the adjacent boxes of over 2 SD weights are not significant.

7.4.2 Peg-tile

total collected: 55
ave wt per 20m box: 5.008g
County average: 61.381g

Although it may seem pointless to collect roof tile, it is picked up in case it should turn out to be Roman brick or tile. On this site, collectors were asked not to collect definite peg-tile fragments, but to collect anything they were unsure of. Therefore the total collected is quite small, and well below County average. The distribution of peg-tile is concentrated in a north-west to south-east band across the middle of the survey area. There is no particular significance in this pattern, which is probably a manure scatter.

8 Conclusions

The post-medieval and modern material gathered in this survey (pottery and peg-tile) is almost certainly the result of manuring operations over the last three or four centuries, and has no other significance. However, the prehistoric and Roman material shows a definite bias towards the south-western part of the survey area. This in itself might suggest some kind of prehistoric or Roman activity in that area, but the fact that there are three adjacent boxes (A14, A23, A24) with large weights of burnt flints confirms the existence of a previously unknown archaeological site focused on that spot, but perhaps extending over a slightly larger area.

9 Acknowledgements

Thanks to Essex Wildlife Trust (especially Mr Duncan Bridges) for commissioning the work. Site work was supervised by Stephen Benfield. The project was monitored by Martin Winter for Colchester Borough Council. Report text by Howard Brooks.

10 References

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|------|---|
| Fawn, A J, <i>et al</i> | 1990 | <i>The red hills of Essex: salt making in antiquity</i> |
| Medlycott, M, & Germany, M, | 1994 | 'Archaeological fieldwalking in Essex 1985-93: interim results', <i>Essex Archaeology and History</i> , 25 (1994), 14-27 |
| Sealey, P R, | 1995 | 'New light on the salt Industry and red hills of prehistoric and Roman Essex', <i>Essex Archaeology and History</i> , 26 (1995), 65-81 |

11 Glossary

medieval	from AD 1066 to Henry VIII
NGR	National Grid Reference
post-medieval	after Henry VIII and up to Victorian
PMRE	post-medieval red earthenware
residual	an earlier object out of place in a later context (eg a Roman coin in a Victorian pit)
Roman	period from AD 43 to around AD 430

12 Archive deposition

The finds and paper archive are held at Colchester Archaeological Trust, 12 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3NF, but both will be permanently deposited with Colchester Museums, under accession code 2000.133.

13 Statistical information

Key:

n	= number of 20-metre boxes walked
x	= total weight of individual finds type (ie Roman potsherds)
Ex2	= sum of weight of individual finds individually squared
μ	= average weight of finds type per 20-metre box
σ	= standard deviation
+1 σ	= +1 SD weight
+2 σ	= +2 SD weight

Struck flint

n	119
x	4.6
Ex2	16.3
μ	0.039
σ	1.517
+1 σ	1.556
+2 σ	1.594

Roman pottery

n	119
x	18
Ex2	108
μ	0.151
σ	2.428
+1 σ	2.579
+2 σ	2.730

Burnt flint

n	119
x	322
Ex2	9812
μ	2.706
σ	16.228
+1 σ	18.934
+2 σ	21.640

Roman brick/tile

n	119
x	221
Ex2	5459
μ	1.857
σ	18.401
+1 σ	20.258
+2 σ	22.115

Medieval pottery

n 119
x 6
Ex2 36
 μ 0.050
 σ 2.000
+1 σ 2.050
+2 σ 2.101

Post-medieval and modern pottery

n 119
x 134
Ex2 25051
 μ 8.546
 σ 18.358
+1 σ 26.905
+2 σ 35.451

Medieval and post-medieval tile

n 119
x 596
Ex2 13521
 μ 5.008
 σ 14.145
+1 σ 19.154
+2 σ 24.162

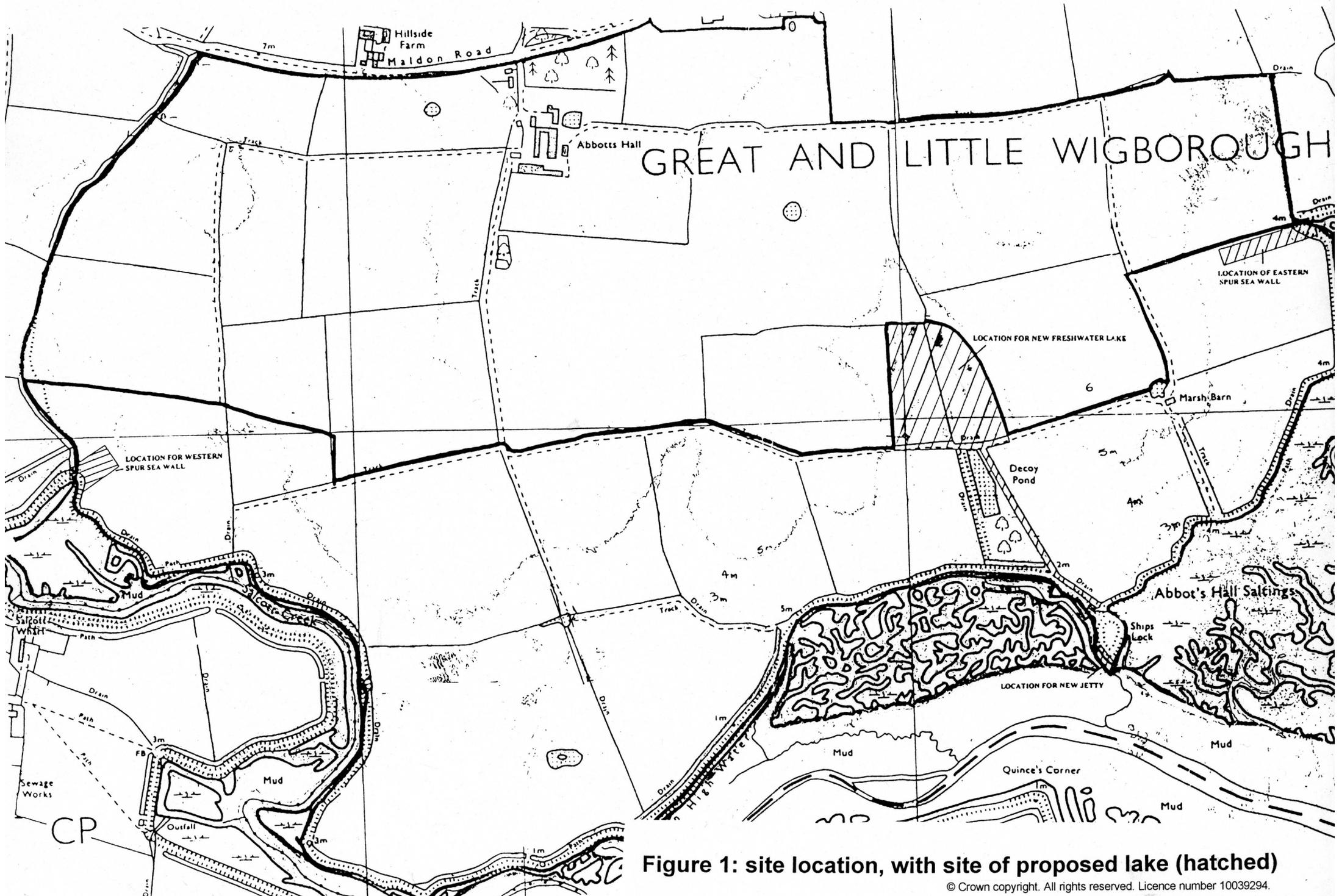


Figure 1: site location, with site of proposed lake (hatched)

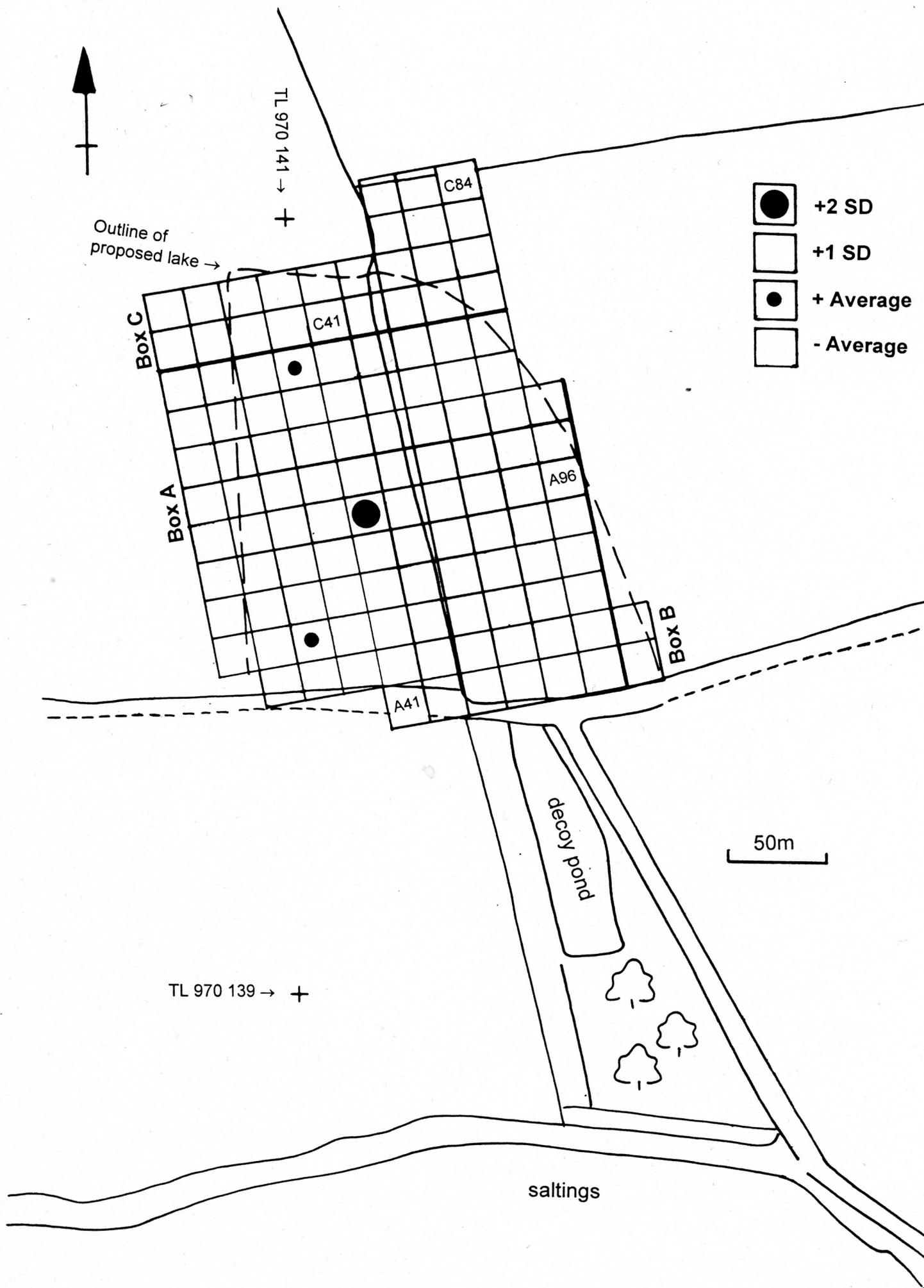


Figure 2: distribution of struck flints

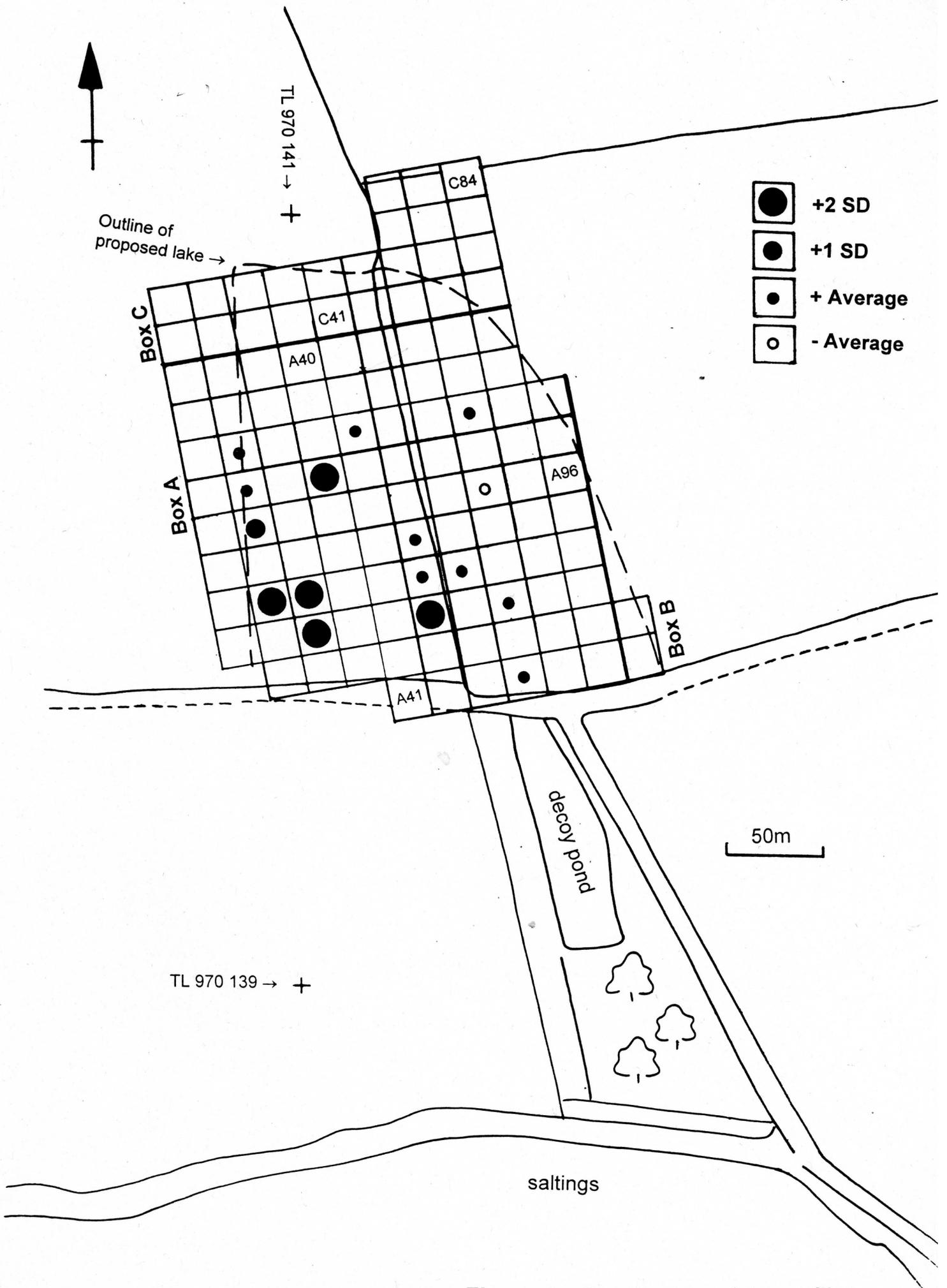


Figure 3: distribution of burnt flints

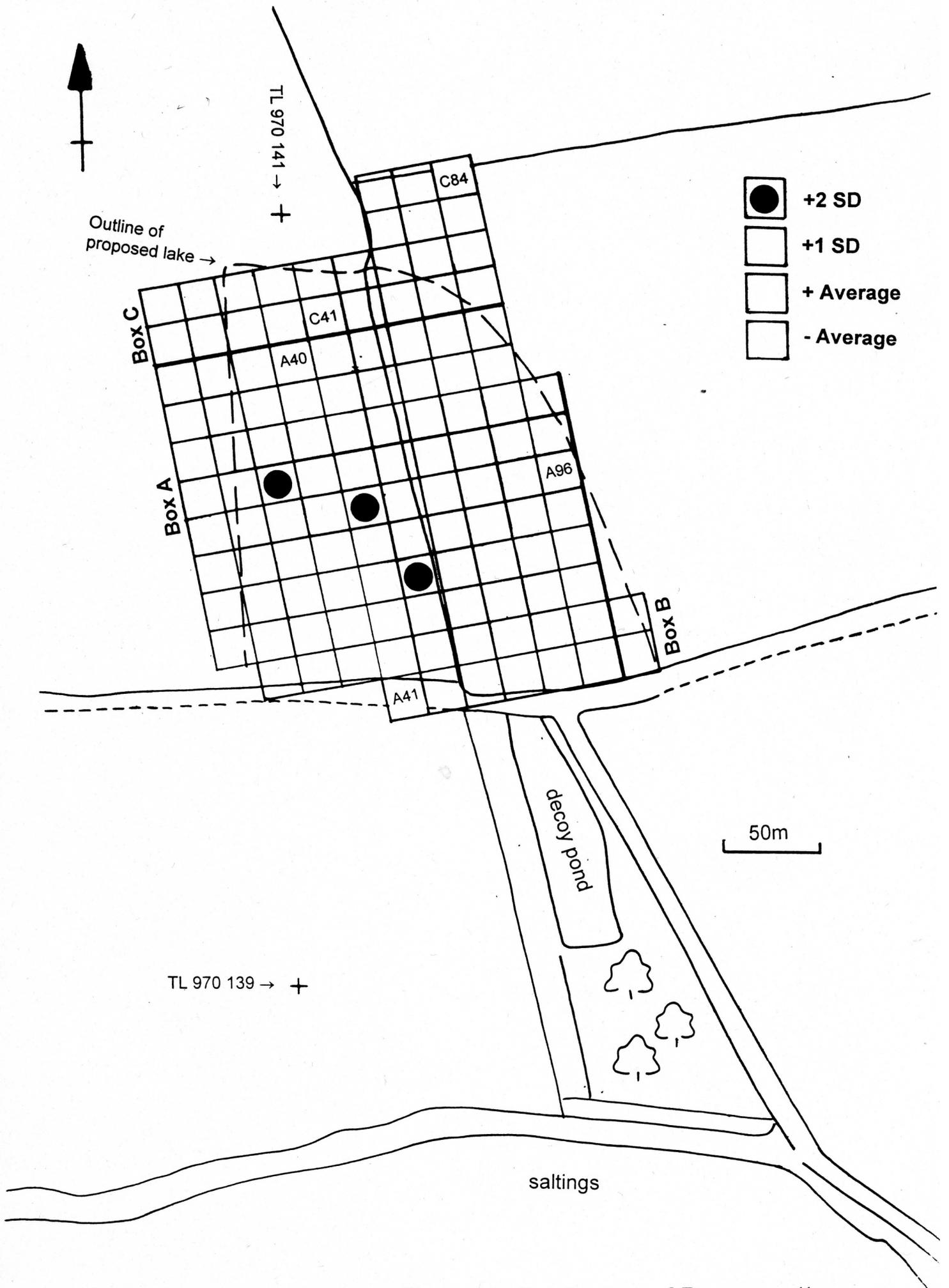


Figure 4: distribution of Roman pottery

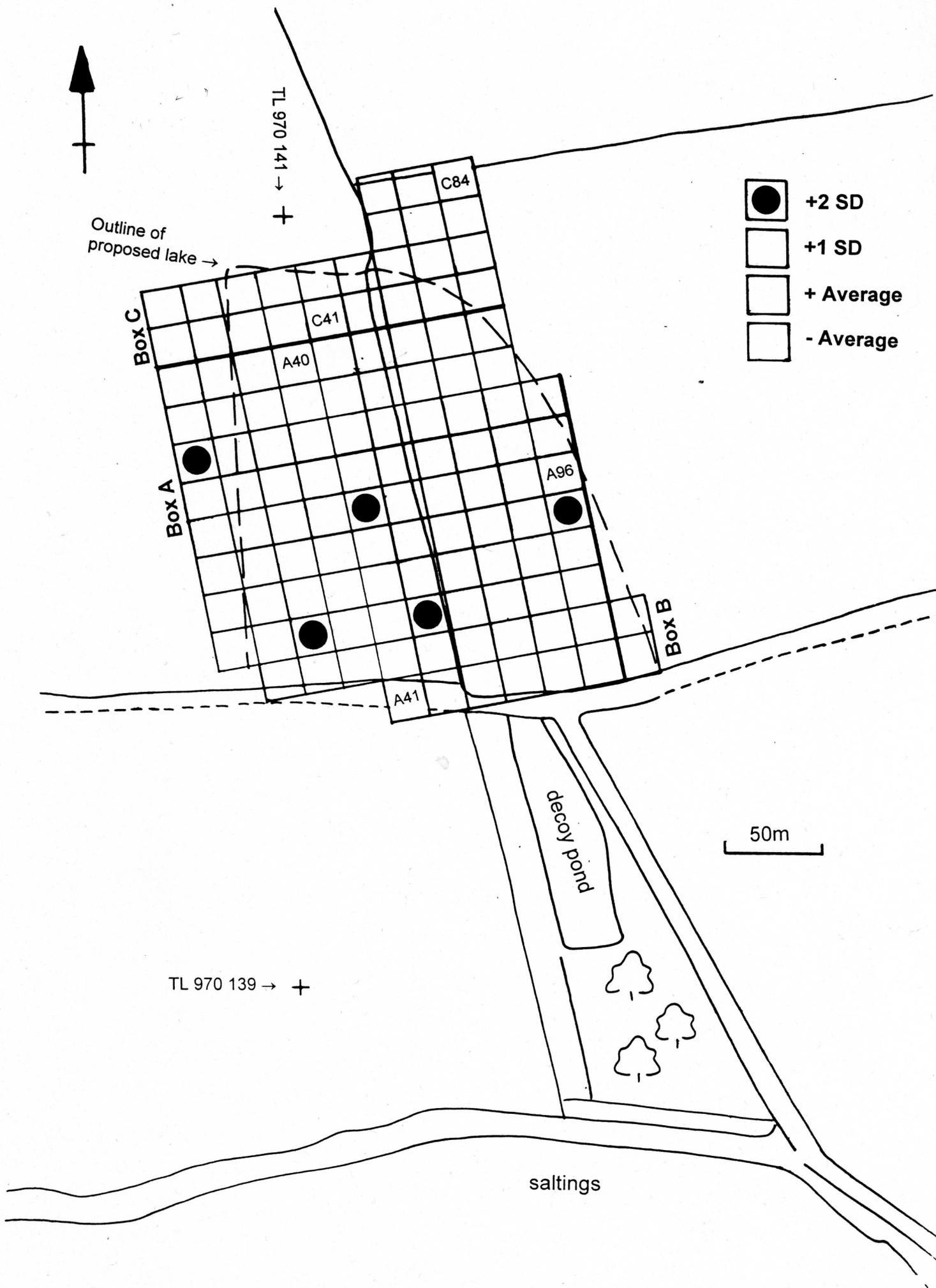


Figure 5: distribution of Roman brick and tile

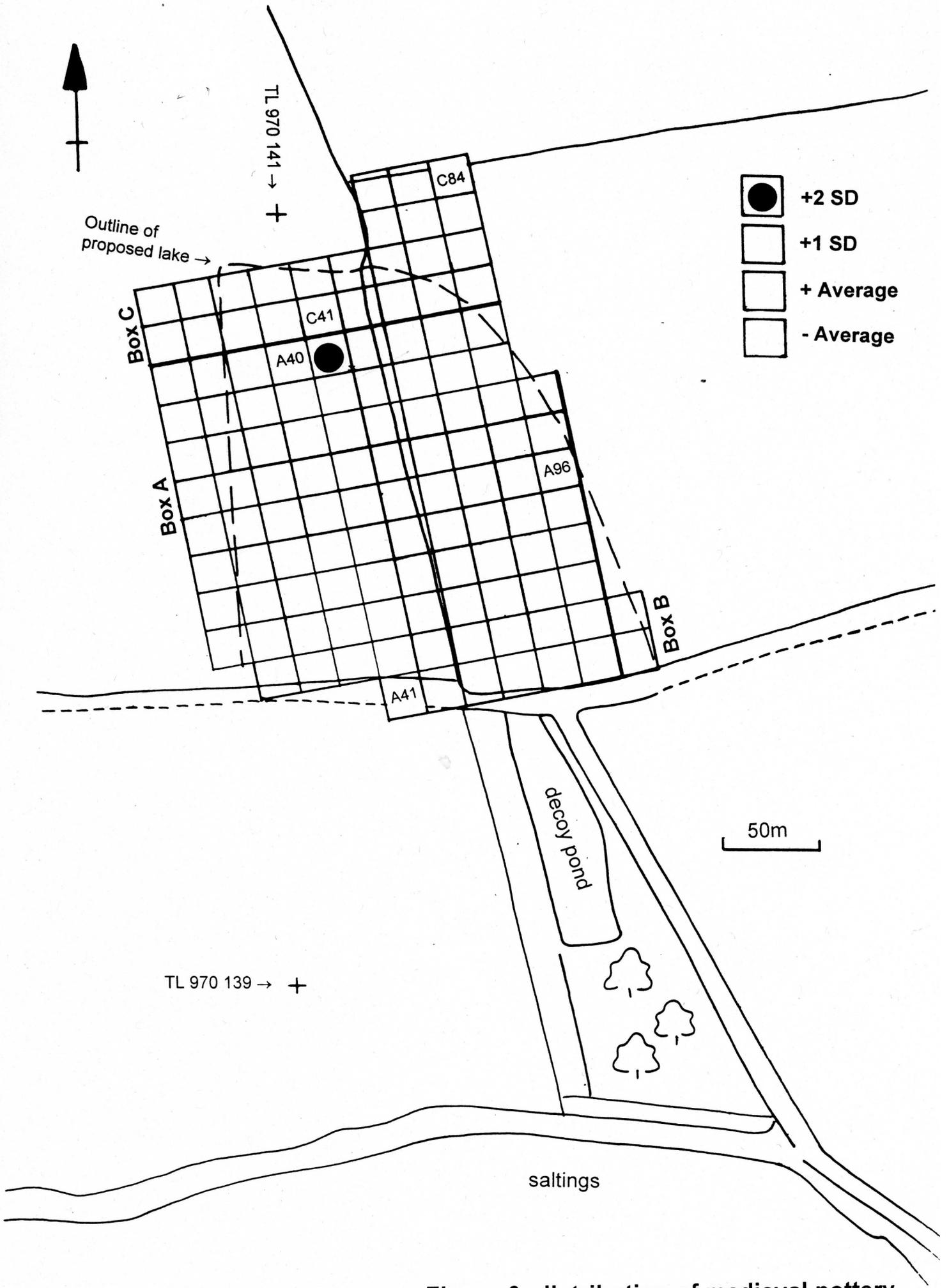


Figure 6: distribution of medieval pottery

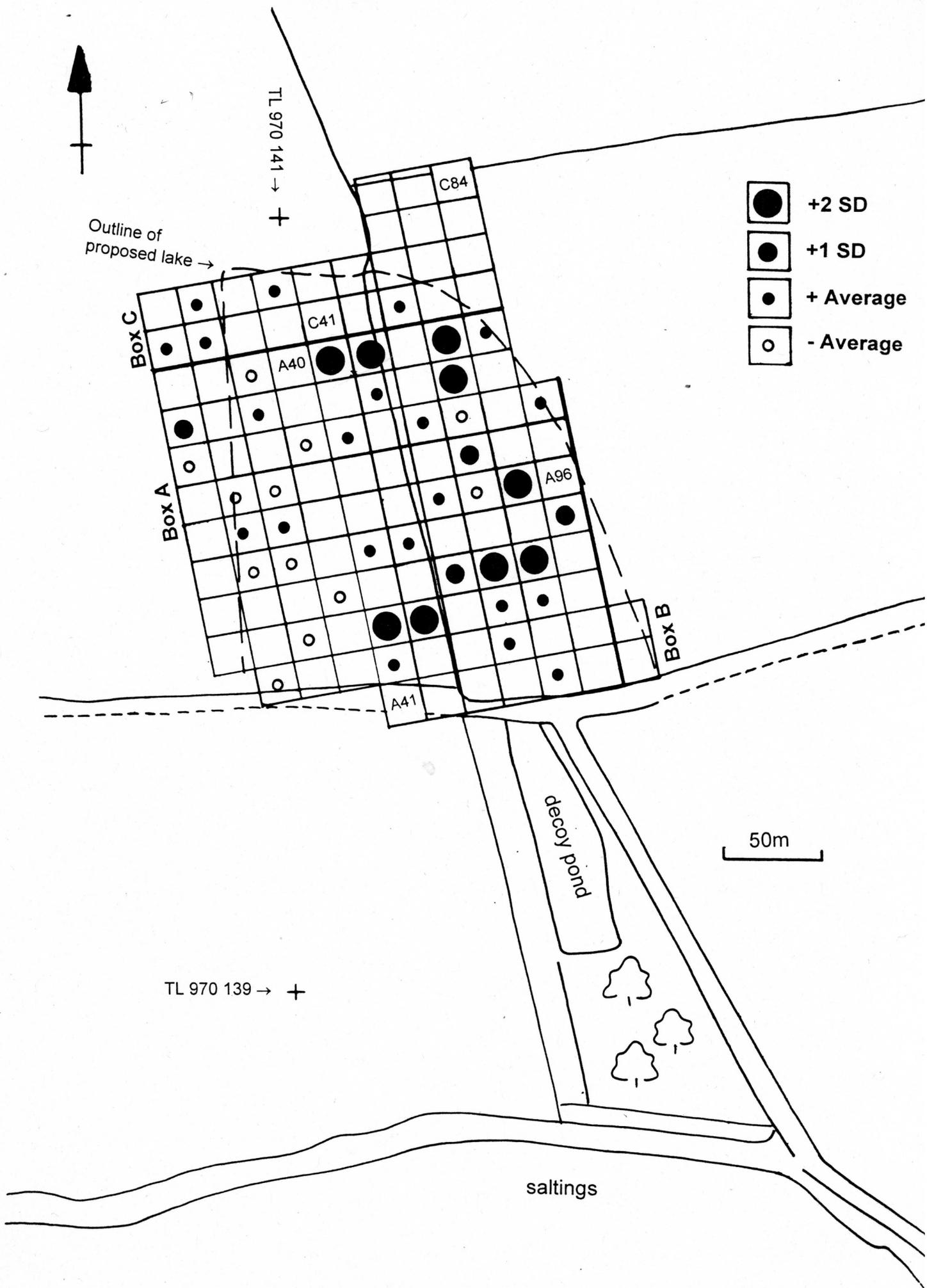


Figure 7: distribution of post-medieval and modern pottery

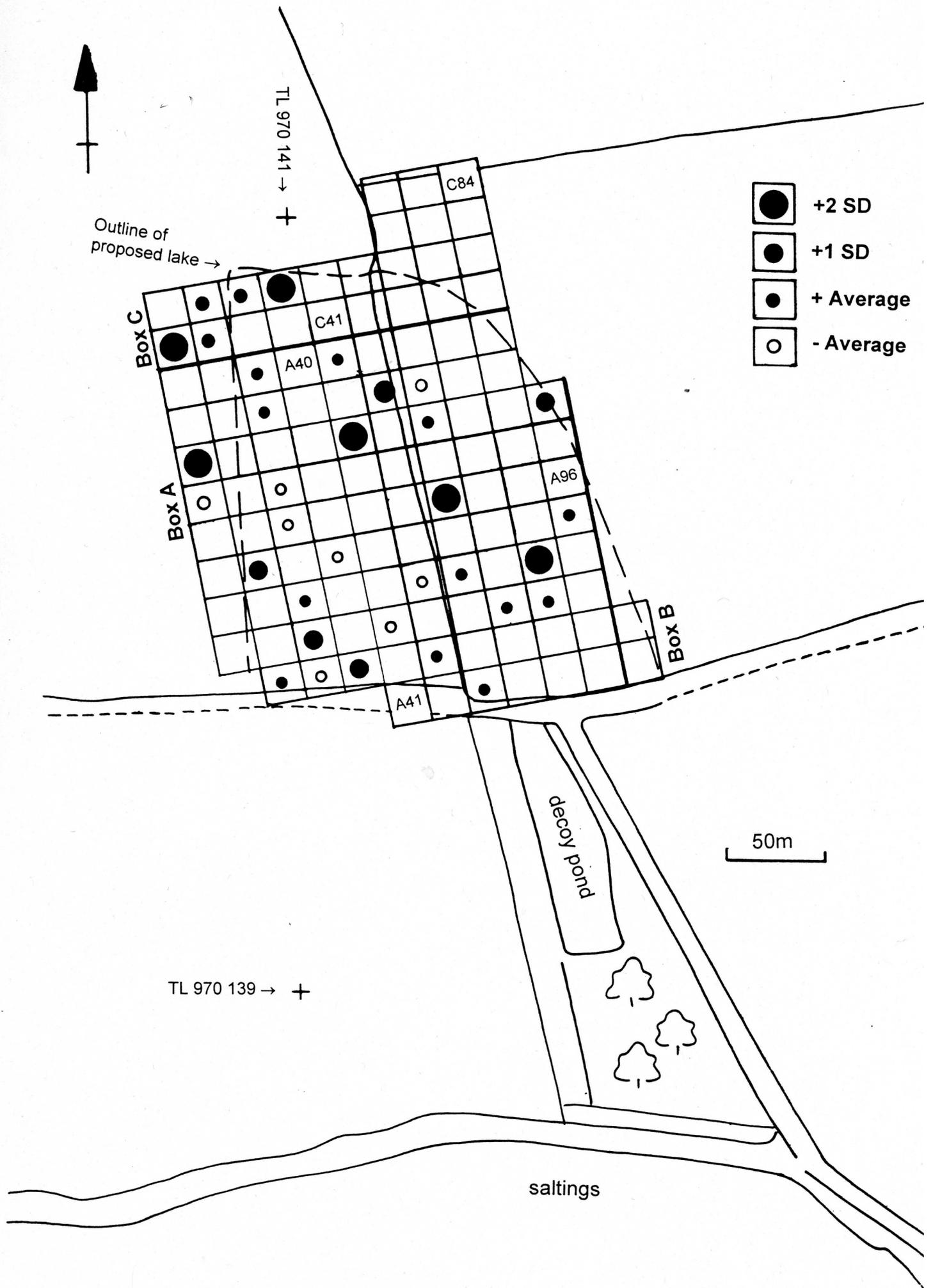


Figure 8: distribution of peg tile