Marcham pottery and fired clay small finds

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Pottery and fired clay small finds include items for textile production and metalworking, as well as personal items. A total of 76 fired clay and pottery fabric artefacts were recovered, across all three zones, with smaller numbers of artefacts across a number of trenches in Zones MFNA and MF, and larger numbers across most trenches in zone MFP (Table 1). Artefacts included crucible fragments for metalworking (Table 2), spindle whorls and loomweights (Table 3) for textile working, two figurines, two beads, gaming counters (Table 4), fired clay fragments and fragments of daub (Table 5).

Spindle whorls

Twelve spindle whorls made from fired clay or from cut down Roman-period pottery were recovered (Table 3). Spindle whorls were concentrated in zone MFP, two each in Trenches 2 and 6 and single finds in Trenches 4 and 5. Single spindle whorls were also found in the areas leading south from the arena (MF Trenches 8 and 40), and also MF Trench 24, MF Trench 14 and MFNA Trench 1.

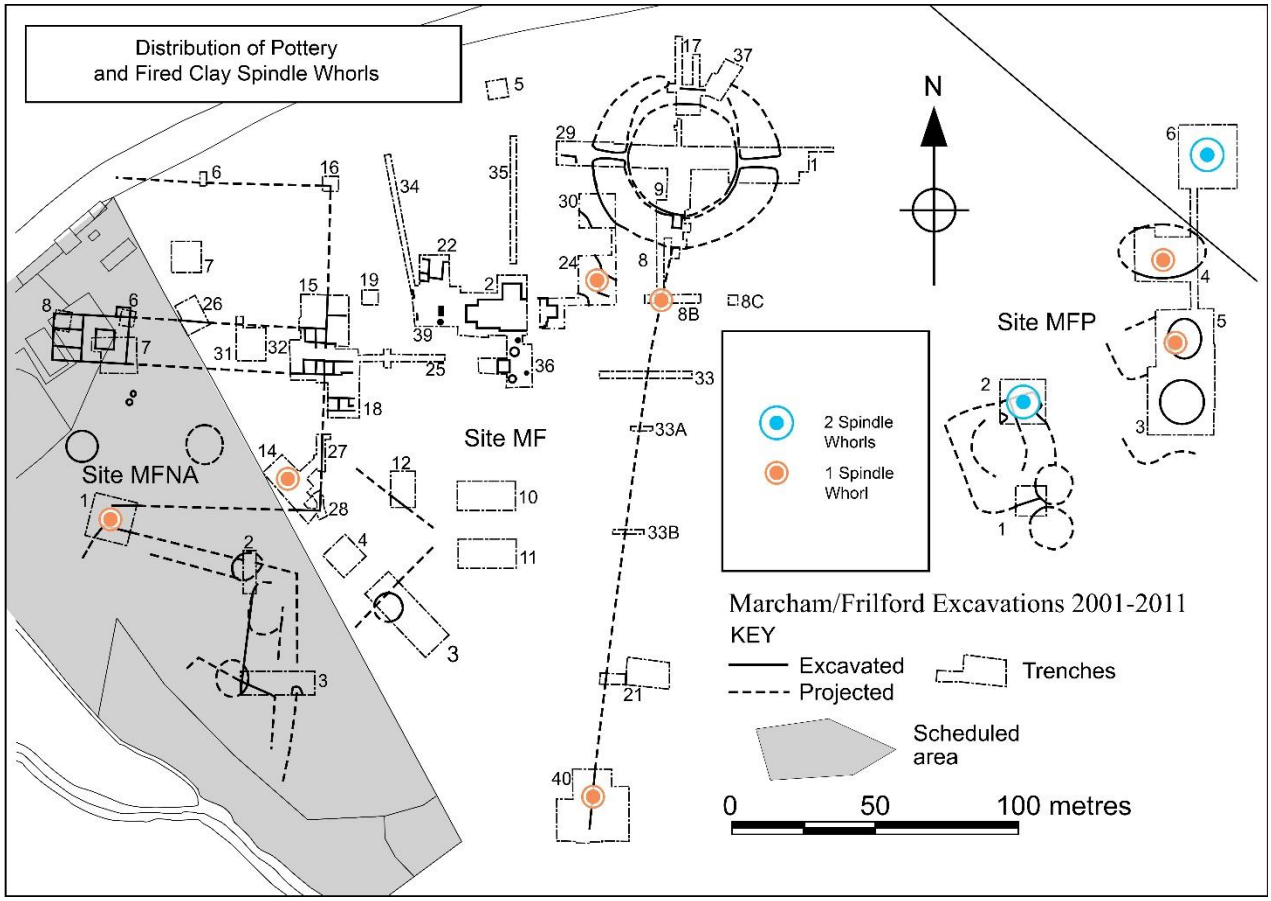


Figure 1

Shape-based typologies are generally used (Alberti, 2017), although a comprehensive typology is not yet available for Roman Britain. The twelve spindle whirls included five discoid shape, two globular shape, one fragment which could be globular or biconical, a disc shape with rounded edges from a Saxon context (MFP Trench 6), and two biconical Iron Age spindle whorls (MFP Trenches 2 and 5).

The spindle whorls recovered were a range of weights and sizes, although it should be noted that some were incomplete. A lack of uniformity in weight and size of spindle whorls has been observed for Roman Britain generally (Alberti, 2017), suggesting that these are made to accommodate the individuality of individual spinners' techniques, rather than central manufacture. The use of different types of cut down pottery at Marcham is consistent with this.

Experimental archaeologists have considered the shape, weight and material used for spindle whorls in terms of spinning speeds and suitability for different types of yarns (Alberti, 2017) but found it difficult to draw clear conclusions due to the lack of uniformity across spindle whorls' shape and dimensions, and the individuality of their users' spinning techniques. The dimensions and weight of each spindle whorl was recorded for the Marcham finds to facilitate such future research.

At Nettleton two decorated Kimmeridge shale spindle whorls were found together with other items and a large number of late fourth century coins in a building associated with industrial activity (Wedlake, 1982:88). At Uley three pottery and one bone spindle whorl came from votive deposits of Final Iron Age date (Woodward and Leach, 1993:192). Two further spindle whorls were recovered, a stone spindle whorl from a second to mid-fourth century context and a decorated bone spindle whorl from a late fourth century context.

The association of spindle whorls with female gender has been widely debated (Alberti, 2017), supported by evidence from Roman classical sources who considered spinning an exclusively female task, spindle whorls buried with females, represented on women's burial stones and regularly associated with other female items such as hairpins, beads and bangles.

At Marcham spindle whorls were found across a wider range of trenches than those where loomweights have been found. Considering the evidence from Uley, this suggests that spindle whorls may have had a wider role than textile production at Marcham.

Loomweights

Loomweights and fragments of loomweights were only recovered from zone MFP, in Trenches 2,3,4,5 and 6 (Figure 2 and Table 3).

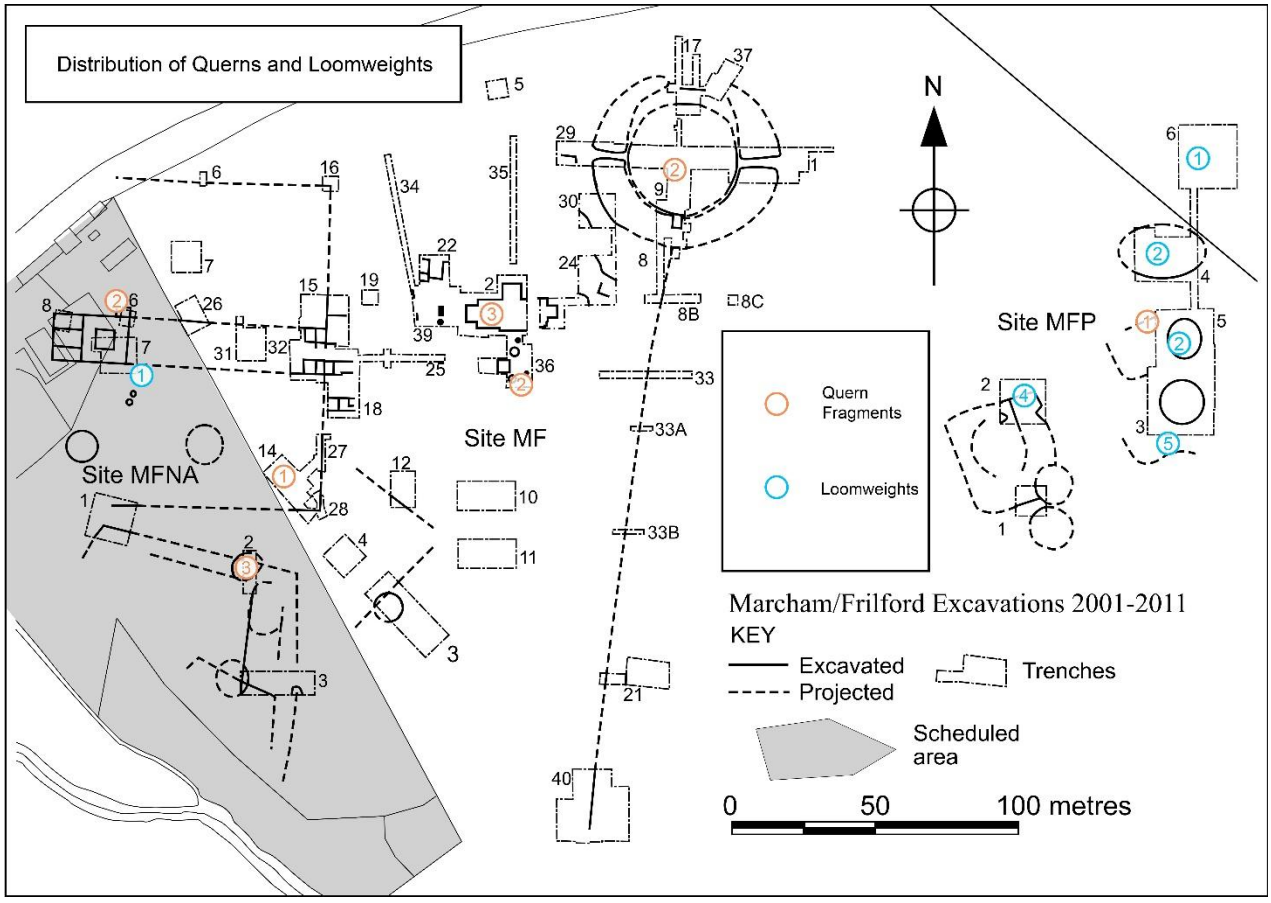


Figure 2

Triangular loomweights with paired perforations across the corners are typical of the Iron Age (Atkins et. al. 2008:105). Four complete triangular loomweights, with a pair of perforations through each corner were recovered. Eight incomplete triangular loomweights were found, as well as fragments of another

three possible triangular loomweights. These loomweights and fragments were roughly made of orange fired clay. One possible loomweight fragment found was well smoothed with a rounded end, and may not be triangular, but the fragment was insufficient to determine its shape. This may be a Saxon loomweight, which are annular or bun-shaped (Atkins et. al. 2008:230).

No loomweights were recorded at the shrines at either Nettleton or Uley.

Metalworking

Based simply on the fired clay evidence metal working equipment appears to have been focused in zone MFP (Trenches 2, 3 and 4), with some activity in zone MF (Trenches 3,14 and 21), (Table 2). However, based on the distribution of iron and copper alloy slag and smithing hearths, metal-working evidence is much more widespread across the site. Trenches MF2, MF3, MF14, MF 18, and MF34 had particularly large concentrations of iron slag. Three crucible fragments and two possible crucible fragments were recovered, together with eleven fired clay fragments with metal working slag (Table 2).

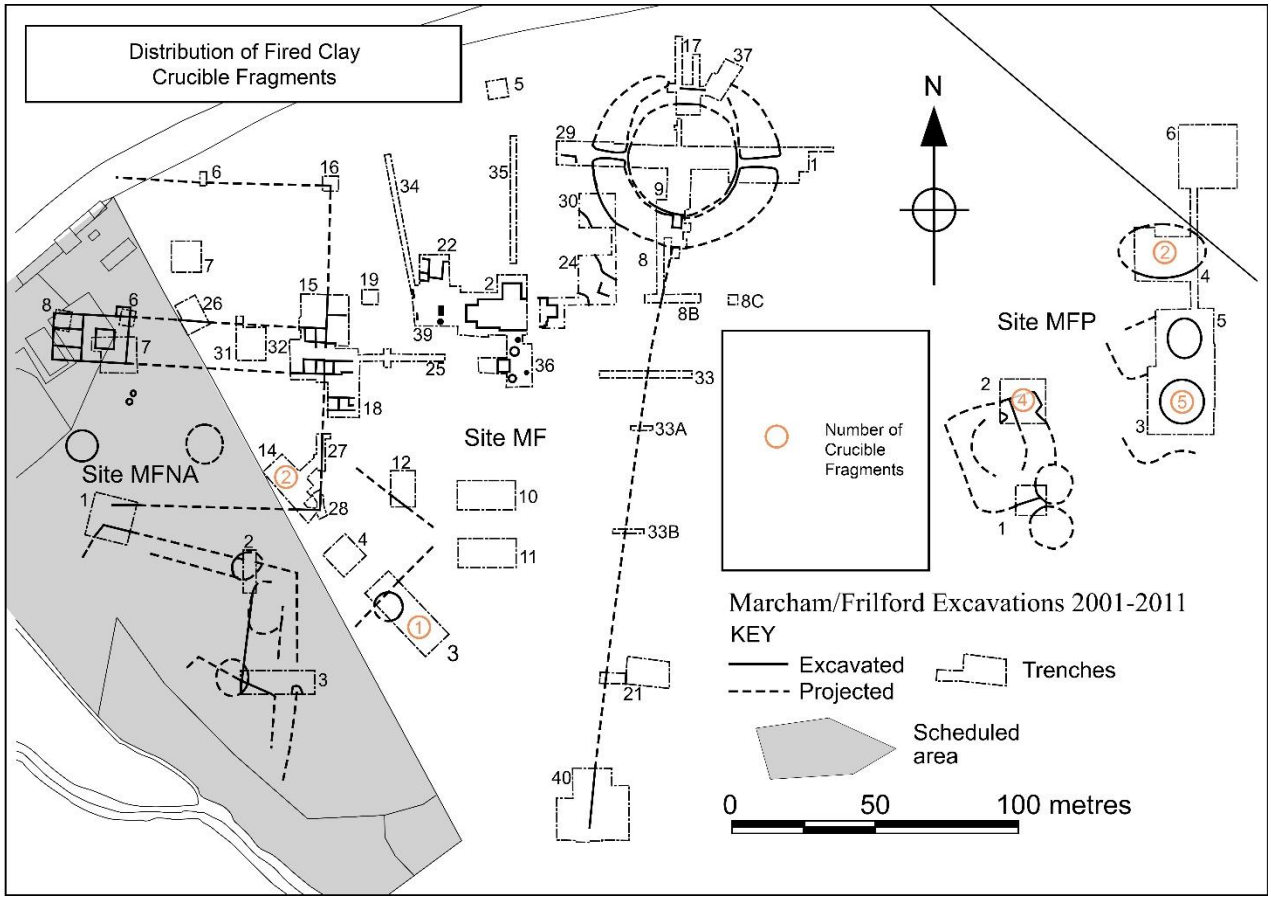


Figure 3

MF Trench 14 yielded a fragment of very large fired clay crucible (c2.5cm thick at rim), and an oval 'cup' shape fragment, possibly a crucible, possibly Iron Age. A crucible fragment with iron slag visible, and several large fragments, probably of a crucible, with iron slag, were found in MF Trench 3. A fired clay fragment found in MF Trench 21 showed evidence of burning at high temperature, with some metal working slag visible.

Three fired clay crucible fragments with metal working slag were found in MFP Trench 2, two of which showed traces of iron slag and one of copper alloy slag. Three crucible fragments were found in MFP Trench 3, including one with traces of iron slag, and two halves of a small circular crucible with traces of copper alloy slag. Several crucible fragments, including fragments of a crucible with traces of copper alloy slag were recovered from MFP Trench 4. Crucible fragments were also found in MFP Trenches 2 and 3. A possible rim and side of a fired clay fragment, fired to high temperature, possibly a crucible,

was recovered from MFP Trench 3. A fired clay fragment, possibly a trivet associated with metal working, was also recovered from MFP Trench 3.

At Nettleton bronze smelting was evidenced by four crucibles associated with late fourth century buildings (Wedlake, 1982: 74-75), and a small crucible fragment in a first century enclosure ditch. Twenty seven lumps of iron slag were recorded, mainly in the buildings associated with the late fourth century domestic settlement and with the first century enclosure on the higher level above the valley (Wedlake, 1982: 229). Furnaces near both these areas suggest a small smelting industry.

At Uley a small quantity of slag and metal working debris was found during excavation, and larger quantities were found during fieldwalking of adjacent areas (Woodward and Leach, 1993). Iron smelting and smithing are thought to have taken place some distance from the excavated shrine area. There is a small amount of evidence for copper alloy metalworking, and votive rings and finger rings may have been made on site.

Counters

Fourteen gaming counters were recovered from across the site (Table 4 and Table 4). All finds were single items, except for MF Trench 18, where two counters were recovered. One counter was found in MFNA Trench 7 (over the temple building), two over the path leading to the temple (MF Trenches 26 and 32), and three in the trenches over the buildings at the entrance to the temple precinct (MF Trenches 15 and 18). Single counters were found in MF Trench 39, MF Trench 2 and MF Trench 36. One counter was found in MF Trench 1 (the arena), and two associated with the drain leading from the amphitheatre (MF Trenches 9 and 40). Single counters were also found in MFP Trench 2 and MPF Trench 3.

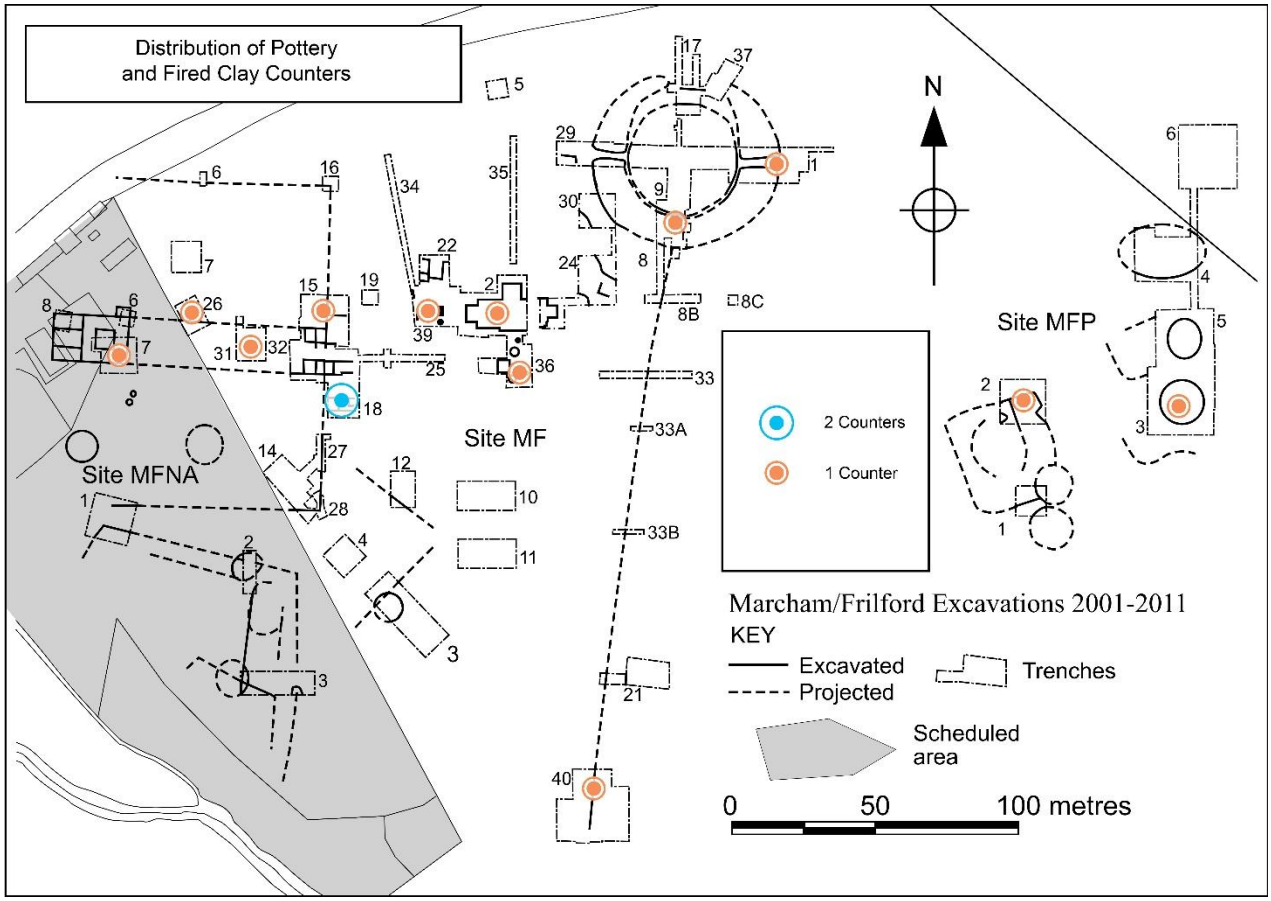


Figure 4

All the counters were discs made by cutting down pieces of Roman-period pottery. One counter of brown colour-coat pottery had a thin red line inscribed cross on the buff surface (MF Trench 9, SF no. 3259).

At Nettleton, two counters of roughly made coarse grey ware pottery were found in a first century enclosure ditch (Wedlake, 1982:220). Five bone, one bronze, one glass and one silver counter were also

found. Nine counters were found at Uley, three of fired clay in late first/second century contexts, four glass, one lead and two bone spindle whorls associated with fourth century structures (Woodward and Leach, 1993).

Figurines

Part of a ceramic bull figurine made from local red colour-coat fabric was found in the trench over the temple building (MFNA Trench 7, SF424). The ears, horns and nose were probably deliberately defaced. Dated to the late 3rd/4th century CE. An animal pottery fragment, possibly from a full animal figure, in a grey pottery with black slip, was found in MFNA Trench1 (SF69). The fragment is broken at both ends.

For further discussion of these two items see the Votive Finds and Practices report by Sheila Raven on this website.

Beads

Two fired clay beads were recovered, in zone MF, Trenches 18 and 36.

Fired clay fragments

Eleven fragments or lumps of fired clay were found in MPF Trenches 3 and 5 (Table 5).

A daub fragment with a wattle imprint was recovered from MF Trench 2. Two further fragments of daub were recovered (MFNA Trench 1 and MFP Trench 3).

Bibliography

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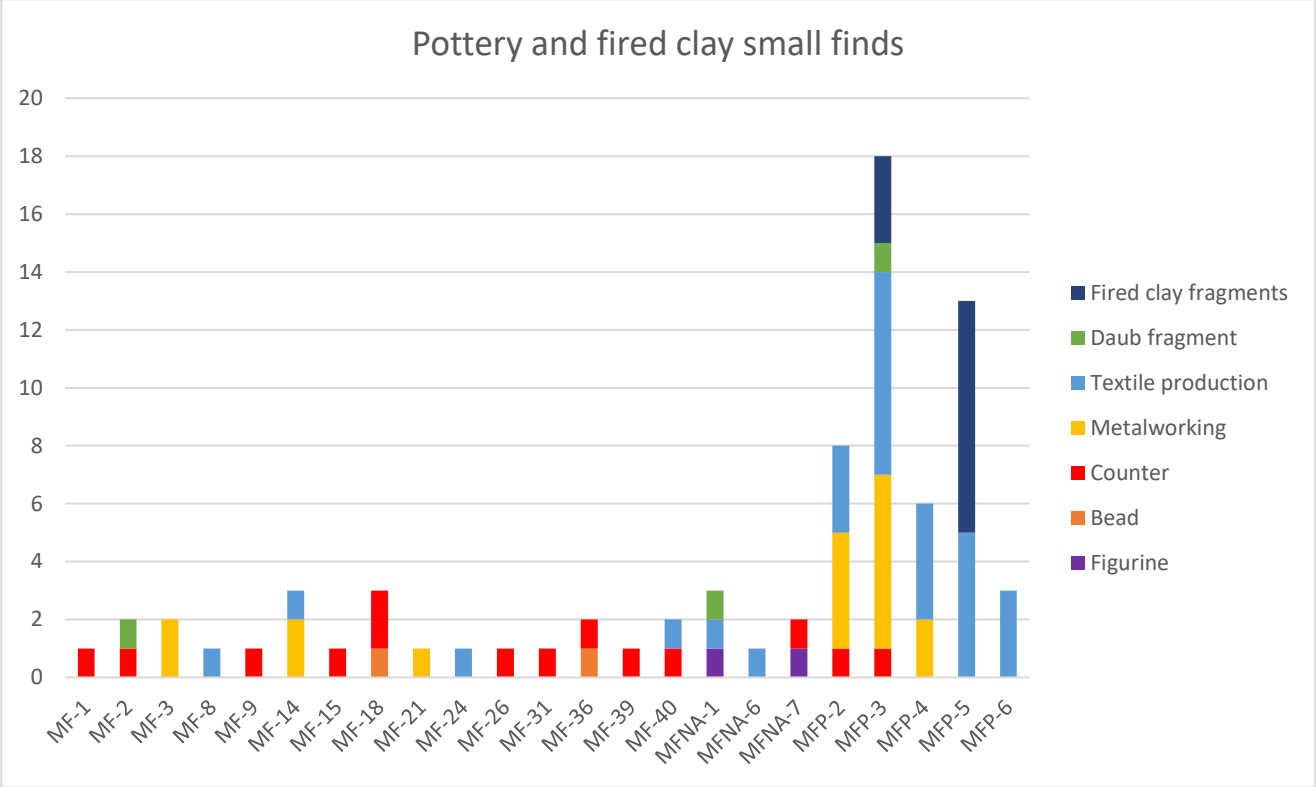
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Appendix - Analysis of data

Table 1: Pottery and fired clay finds – all zones



Pottery and fired clay small finds														
	Figurine	Bead	Counter	Fired clay fragment with metal working slag	Crucible fragment	Possible crucible fragment	Possible trivet	Spindle whorl	Triangular loomweight	Loomweight fragment	Possible loomweight	Daub fragment	Fired clay fragments	Grand Total
MF-1			1											**1**
MF-2			1									1		**2**
MF-3				2										**2**
MF-8								1						**1**
MF-9			1											**1**
MF-14					1	1		1						**3**
MF-15			1											**1**
MF-18		1	2											**3**
MF-21				1										**1**
MF-24								1						**1**
MF-26			1											**1**
MF-31			1											**1**
MF-36		1	1											**2**
MF-39			1											**1**
MF-40			1					1						**2**
MFNA-1	1							1				1		**3**
MFNA-6								1						**1**
MFNA-7	1		1											**2**
MFP-2			1	3	1			2		1				**8**
MFP-3			1	3	1	1	1		3	4		1	3	**18**
MFP-4				2				1		3				**6**
MFP-5								1	1		3		8	**13**
MFP-6								2			1			**3**
Grand Total	**2**	**2**	**14**	**11**	**3**	**2**	**1**	**12**	**4**	**8**	**4**	**3**	**11**	**77**

Table 2: Metalworking

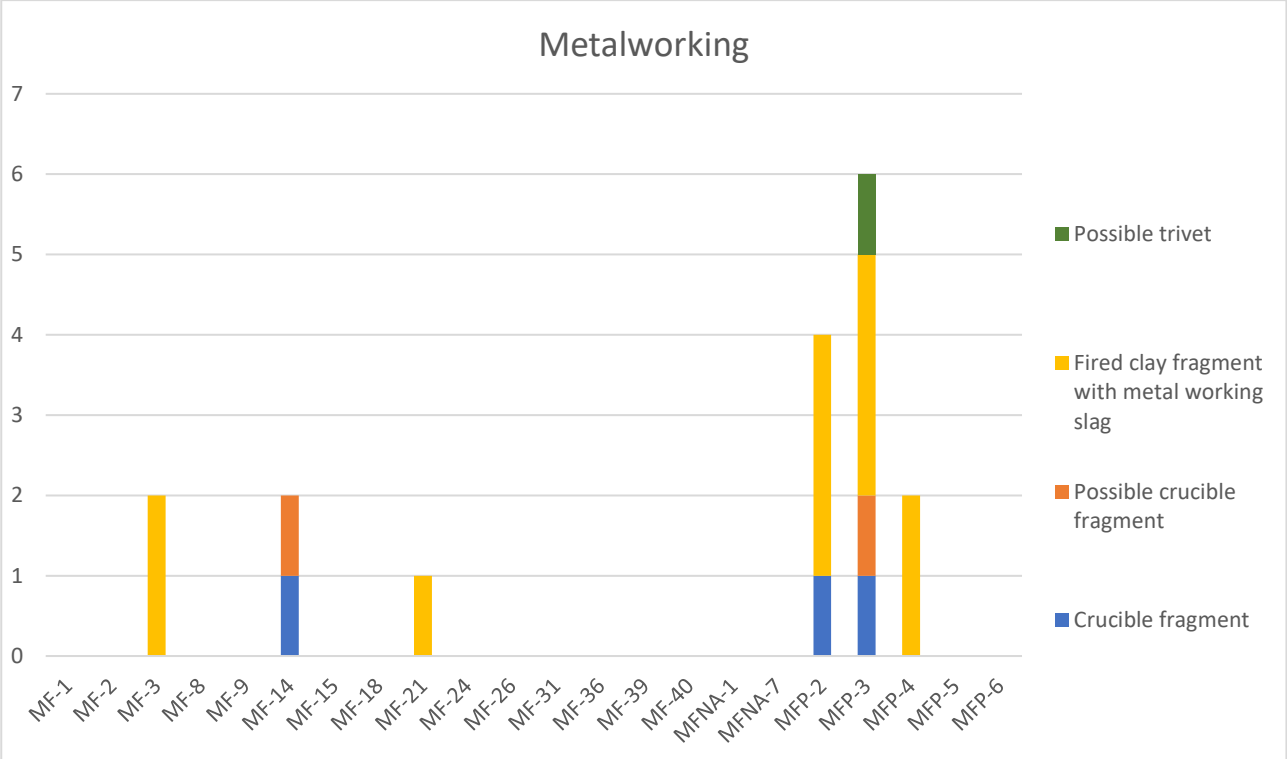


Table 3: Textile production

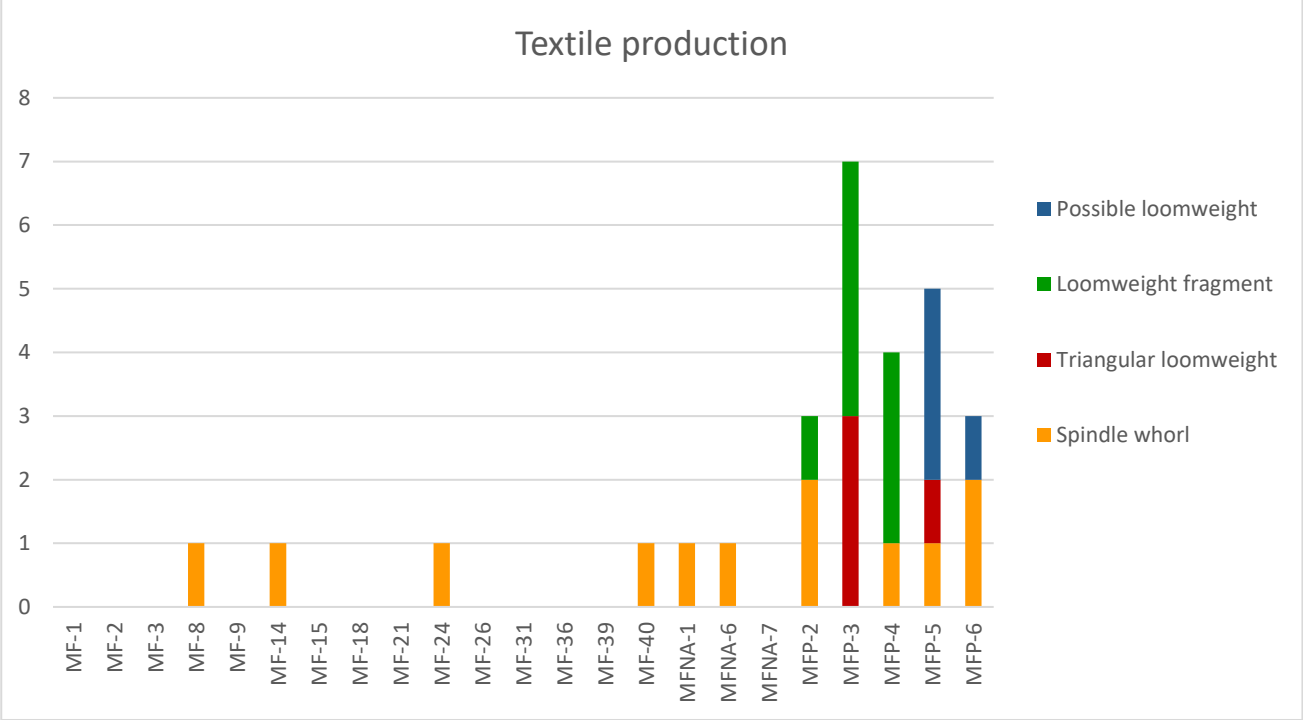


Table 4: Personal items



Table 5: Fired clay fragments

