

**A46: NEWARK-WIDMERPOOL IMPROVEMENT  
INTERIM REPORT ON FIELDWALKING  
NOVEMBER 2004**

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Author: Gavin Kinsley, Trent & Peak Archaeological Unit

30th November 2004

T&PAT Project Code: Fnw.2

Filename: Fnw2Rep30-11-04.doc

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Trent & Peak Archaeological Unit

University Park

Nottingham NG7 2RD

Tel (0115) 9514825

Fax (0115) 9514824

email [gavin.kinsley@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:gavin.kinsley@nottingham.ac.uk)

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## Summary

- **Background.** This report was carried out by Trent & Peak Archaeological Unit on behalf of the Highways Agency. It covers fieldwalking carried out in advance of the improvement of the A46 from Widmerpool to Newark. To date, 29 fields have been walked covering an area of 95.7ha. 29ha are currently weathering and may be walked later in the year. Of the total area designated for fieldwalking on the current project the remaining 55ha have unsuitable land use (e.g. growing crops, unploughed or access refused) but could perhaps be walked in 2005.
- **Results.** Most of the area walked to date lies at the northern end of the scheme. Few finds of any period were recovered in the areas walked in the southern end of the scheme. The worked flint was not closely dateable, but the quantities found in some of the northern fields is perhaps higher than a background scatter. Two concentrations of Romano-British pottery were found, in fields 319-328 and in field 351. Medieval pottery was found in some quantities, but no marked concentrations were detectable. A modest difference in distribution between medieval and later pottery points to a late-medieval change in land-use in the north end of field 351.
- The distribution of finds of all periods is to a degree similar in fields 350 and 351, and although an apparent cluster is visible in 351, it applies to all periods and may reflect general levels of erosion rather than actual concentrations of finds from buried features.

## 1 Project background

This fieldwork and report was commissioned by the Highways Agency in advance of Improvements to the A46 between Newark and Widmerpool. Areas covered were set out in a specification provided by the client.

A total of 95.7ha in twenty-nine fields has been walked to date. A further 29ha may be walked later in the year, leaving 55ha of the 180ha of originally-designated areas unwalked due to unsuitable land-use, cropping or access refusals.

## 2 Method

The fieldwork described below was carried out between February and November 2004. The fields have been numbered serially from south to north, according to the system established for the first phase of fieldwalking carried out in 1992 (Knight and Kinsley 1992), permitting immediate comparison between the 1992 and 2004 work, and the easy eventual formation of a unified and complete archive for the general fieldwalking along the road corridor. Each field was walked on transects spaced 20m apart, each walker inspecting a 2m-wide swathe of ground on each transect. Each medieval and earlier find was allocated a three-letter code from AAA-ZZZ (to provide a unique identifier for the artefact) and the position recorded with an EDM; the find was collected, washed, marked and logged on an MS Access database. The database contains a basic description of each find and co-ordinates on the National Grid. The database was used to create distribution plots in AutoCad 2000.

The areas walked and the finds recovered are recorded in Figs. 1-3.

There is a major contrast in the quantiles of finds recovered south and north of Syerston (Columns A-C, and D respectively in the figs.). Although this divide corresponds with the on-line and off-line stretches of the route, it applies to the flint (which pre-dates the Roman Fosse Way) as well as later finds, and is therefore unlikely to be related to proximity to the road; it is more likely to reflect variations in historic land use related to geology. This variation was also seen in the 1992 fieldwalking (Knight & Kinsley 1992, figs 38-41).

## 3 Results

### 3.1 General

In fields 350 and 351, flint, and Roman, medieval

and medieval-early-post-medieval pottery are all heavily concentrated. Within this group, all periods show a cluster in the west centre of 351, and all but the Roman period show a virtual blank at the southern end of 350. It may be significant that the area at the south of 350, produced three Roman sherds, although blank for the other periods. Because of the wide chronological spread of this material the similar variations in density are more likely to be due to differential erosion rather than reflecting a series of superimposed sites.

### 3.2 Prehistoric

The fieldwalking produced 177 pieces of flint and chert. 58 pieces are considered not to have been humanly-modified: 23 are natural and 35 appear to be plough-bashed lumps. Of the remaining 119 (humanly-modified) pieces most are plough-damaged to some degree.

The humanly-modified flint and chert was laid out by field. Each piece was examined and catalogued to include details of material, any burning or cortication, the form of the piece, and other pertinent information such as the typology of the tools. Complete blades and flakes were measured. The small number of formal tools, or other diagnostic pieces which could be readily dated, means that it is impossible to make more than very general statements about likely periods of activity. Diagnostic pieces were as follows.

**Field 170:** Two pieces of flint, both scrapers were recovered from this field. BFR is a chunky scraper with regular semi-invasive retouch down one side and along the end, and also at the shoulder. It is made on a squat primary flake produced using hard-hammer technique, and is probably Late Neolithic. The other scraper, BFT, appears to be a damaged thumbnail scraper, and is likely to be Early Bronze Age.

**Field 186:** A large flake of flint had a large plain platform on the flake (BFF) and use of hard hammer technique, suggest a date in the Late Neolithic. The size of the flake, and macroscopic examination of the flint type, suggests that it is of a type found in the Vale of Belvoir, a few miles south of the find spot.

**Field 316:** One small flake core (AGE) appears to be later prehistoric.

**Field 317:** BAK is a transverse petit tranchet derivative arrowhead, as described by Stephen Green, a type found in the Neolithic.

**Field 328:** AID is an elegant blade core in very fresh condition, which could belong to the Mesolithic or Early Neolithic. There is an end scraper made on quite poor quality Wolds flint

(AHO), which is most likely to be Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age.

**Field 350:** The tools include a leaf-shaped arrowhead (ATV), which has been quite badly damaged; it would appear to have been a Stephen Green type 3B in shape, retouched over its entire surface. Its present shape suggests that it may have received impact damage in antiquity before suffering extensive plough-damage. Classically this belongs in the Earlier Neolithic.

There are also three scrapers (ATJ, AUD and AVD), one scraper fragment (AVA), and one used flake (ATO). Two scrapers are quite large and probably belong in the Later Neolithic: ATJ is a chunky, but elegant, end scraper, trimmed at the butt and down the sides, presumably for hafting; AUD is made on a thick flake with a large plain butt struck with a hard hammer. Another scraper (AVD) is damaged; it could have been nosed and, with its bulb of percussion indicating hard-hammer removal, would perhaps also belong in the Later Neolithic.

**Field 351:** Several blades and fragments indicate some activity in the Mesolithic or Early Neolithic; AMJ, ANE, ANF are made in translucent brown flint and AKQ is part of a small patinated blade. APH and APV are larger blades of Wolds flint, which could belong here or could belong at a later date. Also probably Mesolithic is APJ, a core of fine black chert.

Early Neolithic activity is suggested by the presence of a leaf-shaped arrowhead (AJT), a type 4C in Stephen Green's classification, which is trimmed around the edges only.

A Late-Neolithic/Early Bronze Age presence is suggested by a plano-convex knife, of the type known as a "slug knife" (ALA). A small nosed scraper (AOD), a small end scraper (APQ), a domed end scraper (ALC) and a horseshoe scraper (APU) could belong here. Flakes with plain platform and bulb of percussion indicating removal using a hard hammer (e.g. ALK), and irregular flake cores (AOS and APM) probably also suggest activity at this time.

Two hammerstones (AJJ and AKM) and one strike-a-light (AJO) are undateable.

#### Comment

The humanly-modified pieces are almost all knapped from small, good quality flint which is grey/brown translucent, Wolds-type or spotted grey. Where cortex is present it is water-worn and abraded, indicating a source derived from a river deposit. The size of the pieces and nature of the raw materials used is entirely consistent with other collections from the Trent Valley in

Nottinghamshire. These are considered to derive from the gravels of the Trent Valley and related drift deposits (Henson, 1989, 11). Since the route of the A46 is within a few kilometres of the River Trent, it is assumed that the raw materials were obtained locally. The one exception is BFF from field 186, which is an unusually large flake for this area. However, it was found in the more southerly part of the route, and flint of this type is known to occur in the Vale of Belvoir, only a few miles to the south.

In all but four of the fields the density of humanly-modified flint was less than 2 pieces per hectare: in Fields 319 and 328 the density was about 3 per hectare; in Fields 317 and 351 the density was close to 5 per hectare. However, none of these fields suggests heavy usage over a closely defined period, but rather lesser use over a protracted period.

Preliminary analysis of flint densities from a number of studies in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire suggests that there are significant break points in density data at 4-5 and 10-15 per hectare when walking at 10 metre spacing, which translates into about 2-3 and 5-7 per hectare when walking at 20 metre spacing as here. The interpretation of these figures is not yet clear, and visibility factors such as intensity of ploughing, alluviation and colluviation must be taken into account, but it would appear that a significant amount of flint, representing more than a background scatter, is present in Fields 317, 319, 328, 350 and 351 at the north end of the scheme. In all the rest of the fields a background scatter only is indicated.

#### 3.3 Romano-British

46 sherds of Romano-British pottery were found. Although little has been walked in the southern areas of the scheme, finds of Romano-British pottery are apparently sparse there. In the northern part of the route, two concentrations stand out, which are sufficiently marked to suggest occupation areas.

The first is in fields 319-328, south of the Roman small town Ad Pontem (at Thorpe).

The second is within field 351 (by Farndon). A matching concentration in the medieval pottery and the flint raises a question over its significance (see 3.1 above); on the other hand the quantity of pottery found does appear significant in comparison to the overall quantity of Roman pottery found in the whole project.

### **3.4 Medieval**

Seventy-seven sherds of medieval (MED) pottery were found, and ninety-five of late-medieval/early-post-medieval (LMEPM) date. The difference in density of finds between the southern and the northern sections of the route is again marked (from field 304 north, pottery is relatively common). Again the concentration in 351 has already been commented upon (3.1 above). No clearly-significant concentrations are detectable. Generally, the distribution of the late-medieval/early-post-medieval pottery mirrors that of the medieval pottery, but, in the north end of field 351, there is just a single sherd of the MED pottery although LMEPM pottery is present in some quantity there, possibly reflecting a change in land-use at the end of the medieval period.

### **4 References**

Knight, D. and Kinsley, G., 1992. Archaeology of the Fosse Way Vol 2. Trent & Peak Archaeological Trust.

Green, H., 1980. The Flint Arrowheads of the British Isles. BAR British Series 75(i).

Henson, D., 1989. 'Away from the core? A Northerner's view of flint exploitation.' In (eds) Brooks and Phillips, Breaking the Stony Silence.





Fig 1: fieldwalking progress and distribution of worked flint recovered to 1 Dec 2004





Fig 2: fieldwalking progress and distribution of Romano-British pottery (red dots) recovered to 1 Dec 2004





Fig 3: fieldwalking progress and distribution of medieval (green) and early post-medieval (black dots) pottery recovered to 1 Dec 2004