



# University of **Leicester**

## Archaeological Services

**An archaeological evaluation by  
fieldwalking on land at MIRA,  
Higham on the Hill, Leicestershire**

**NGR: SP 368 957 centre**

Jon Coward



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fieldwalking on land at MIRA,  
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**For: MIRA**

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## **An archaeological evaluation by fieldwalking survey on land at MIRA, Higham on the Hill, Leicestershire SP 368 957 centre**

### **1. Summary**

*An archaeological evaluation by fieldwalking survey was carried out by ULAS for MIRA in March 2011 on land at Higham on the Hill, Leicestershire SP 368 957, in advance of proposed development. Apart from modern material, the survey recovered a sparse scatter of medieval to late medieval material. Very little lithic material and no Romano-British material was recovered. The archive will be deposited with LMARS under accession code X.A43.2011 in due course*

### **2. Topography and Geology**

The survey was carried out in advance of a proposed new development at the MIRA facility near Nuneaton, which would include the construction of a series of new buildings.

The site lies within the parish of Higham on the Hill, in the district of Hinckley and Bosworth, Leicestershire, around 5 miles north-west of Hinckley and 5 miles south-east of Atherstone (Fig. 1). It is demarcated by the A5 (Roman Watling Street) to the south, which is also the border with Warwickshire. The dismantled Ashby and Nuneaton Joint Railway runs to the south-east of the site, and to the north-west and north-east lie fields and local roads. The total area of the MIRA site is around 310 hectares. The area for the fieldwalking surveys covers c. 45 ha.

The British Geological Survey of England and Wales, sheet 169 (Coventry) shows that the underlying geology over most of the site as Thrussington Till overlain by Dunsmore Gravel and Anker Sand and Gravel to the south, with skerries of siltstone. To the north and north-west of the site lie Wolston Clay and alluvial deposits. The site lies at a height of around 100m above OD, with the high point of the site lying at 104m above OD close to the southern edge.

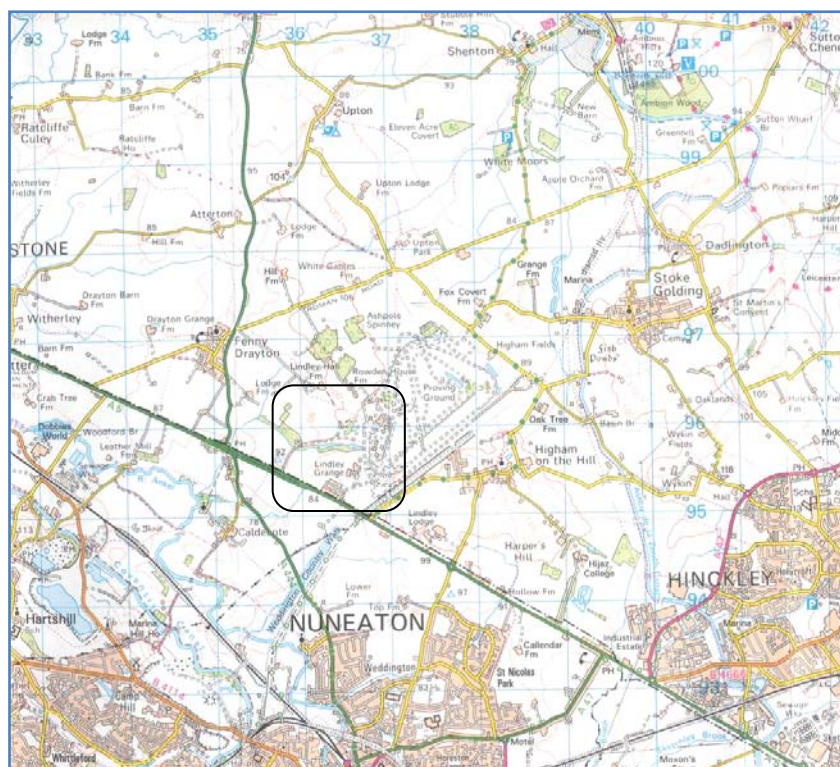


Figure 1 Location of site

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### 3. Historical Background

(Taken from the desk-based assessment (Hunt and Speed 2011))

The Historic Environment Record (HER) for Leicestershire and Rutland shows that the assessment area lies on the site of the old Lindley Airfield (HER Ref. **MLE15973**). The site also lies on the site of the deserted parish of Rowden (**MLE2795**) and adjacent to earthworks associated with the abandoned village of Lindley (**MLE2792**). There are also enclosures dating from the Iron Age adjacent to the site (**MLE9578**) and other prehistoric sites are located nearby (**MLE8245**, **MLE6080** and Warks HER No. **4420 & 4501**). The southern part of the site lies adjacent to the A5 Watling Street, a former Roman Road (**MLE1388**) and the Mancetter Roman Road has been projected to run to the north of the site (**MLE3019**). Roman pottery has been found within the former Lindley parish at the edge of the assessment area (**MLE8503**) and a large amount has been found further to the south (Warks HER No. **7439**). Roman coins have also been retrieved from two hoards to the south (Warks HER No. **5141**) of the site and near Harper's Hill, around 800m south-east of the site (Warks HER No. **1653**).

#### **4. Aims**

The overall aim of the survey is to gather sufficient information to establish the extent, condition, character and date (as far as circumstances permit) of any archaeological features and deposits within the area targeted for evaluation.

#### **5. Methods**

The available arable parts of the site were walked at 20m transects; the ground scanned for artefacts approximately 1 metre either side of this transect line, giving a theoretical 10% sample coverage of the field. Any artefacts of any antiquity were recovered from the surface and their position logged as small finds with hand-held GPS units. These were showing an accuracy of about 3m throughout most of the survey. Modern (i.e. post 1700) artefacts were not recovered deliberately, although inevitably many recovered artefacts turned out to be modern after cleaning and identification. The arable fields consisted of a very large field to the west and north of the main MIRA building complex on the A5; a smaller field to the south-east of this complex; and two adjoining fields further north.

Four hand held GPS units were used, each generating a sequential small find number starting from 001. This number was then prefixed with a unique unit number on download, thus generating four runs of numbers: 1,000; 6,000; 7,000; and 8,000.

The light and soil conditions were good on both survey days. The crops, which appeared to be winter wheat and rape, were well advanced, enough to cause some visibility problems in places. North-west of the MIRA buildings in the big southern field an area of crop was thick enough to be obscuring much of the surface and parts of the smaller southern field was also partially obscured although any concentrations of finds would probably have been seen. The two northern fields were the most problematic in that a large area of the surface was obscured by crop.

## 6. Results

### 6.1 The lithic material (Fig 2)

All the lithics recovered were flint and probably date from the Neolithic to Bronze Age period. As can be seen, the amount was sparse, and no concentrations are apparent. The pieces judged to be natural are not shown. Details of individual finds can be found in the lithics report (Appendix 2).

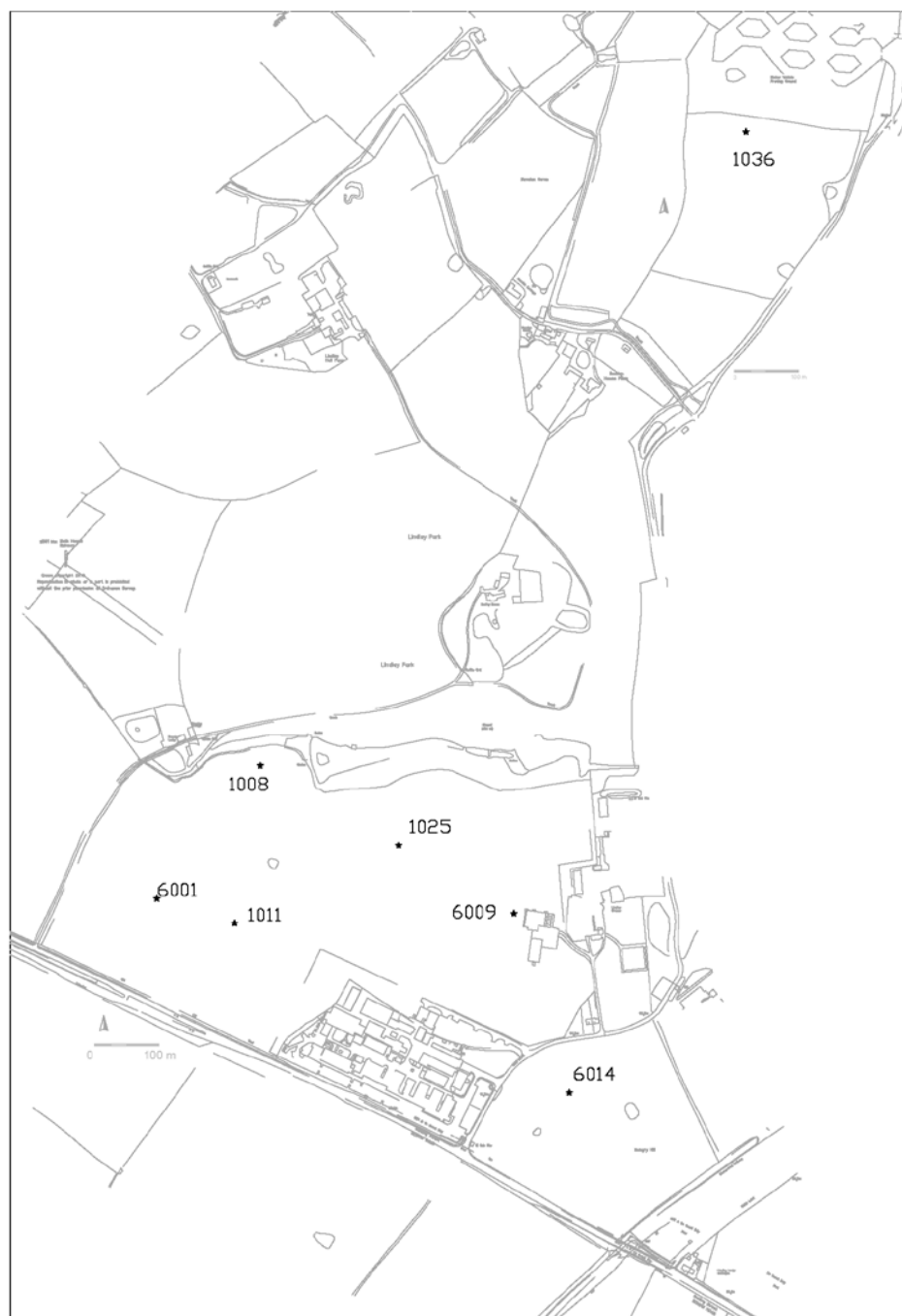


Figure 2 All lithic material.

## 6.2 Romano-British material

No artefacts of Romano-British date were recovered.

## 6.3 Medieval and late medieval material (Figs 3-4)

The survey recovered a scatter of medieval to late medieval artefacts. The majority of the material is pottery although there are some tile fragments in evidence. The amount of pottery is not particularly large, but there does seem to be a slight concentration on the north side of the large field in the southern area, and moreover four of the eight fragments of roof and ridge tile are also from this area. Chilvers Coton is the most common ware. Details of individual finds can be found in the ceramic finds report (Appendix 1).

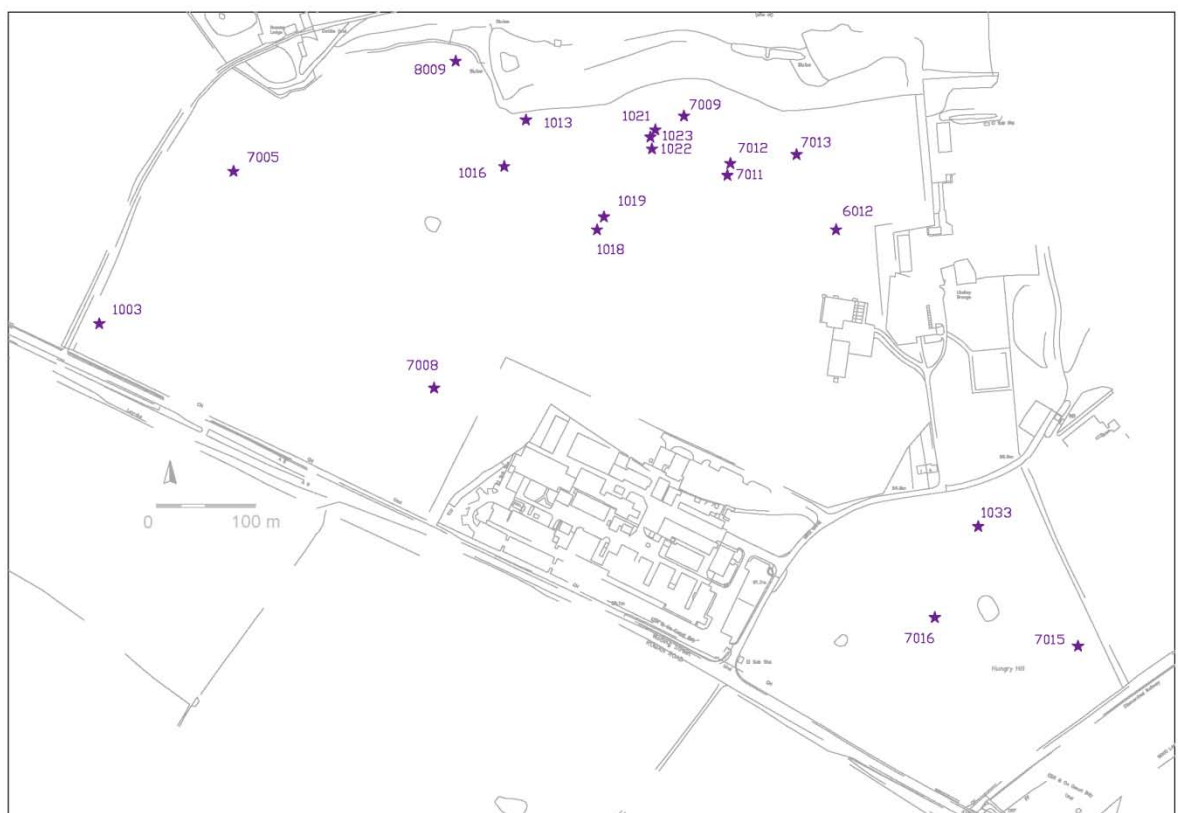


Figure 3 The medieval and late medieval artefacts, south area.





Figure 4 The medieval and late medieval artefacts, north area

#### *6.4 The post-medieval to early modern artefacts (Figs 5-6)*

The post-medieval to early modern assemblage is dominated by coarse earthenwares, of which about one third comprises tile/brick/drainpipe fragments. There are no strong concentrations in evidence, although there appears to be a slight concentration mimicking that of the medieval material, i.e. on the north side of the big field in the southern area.

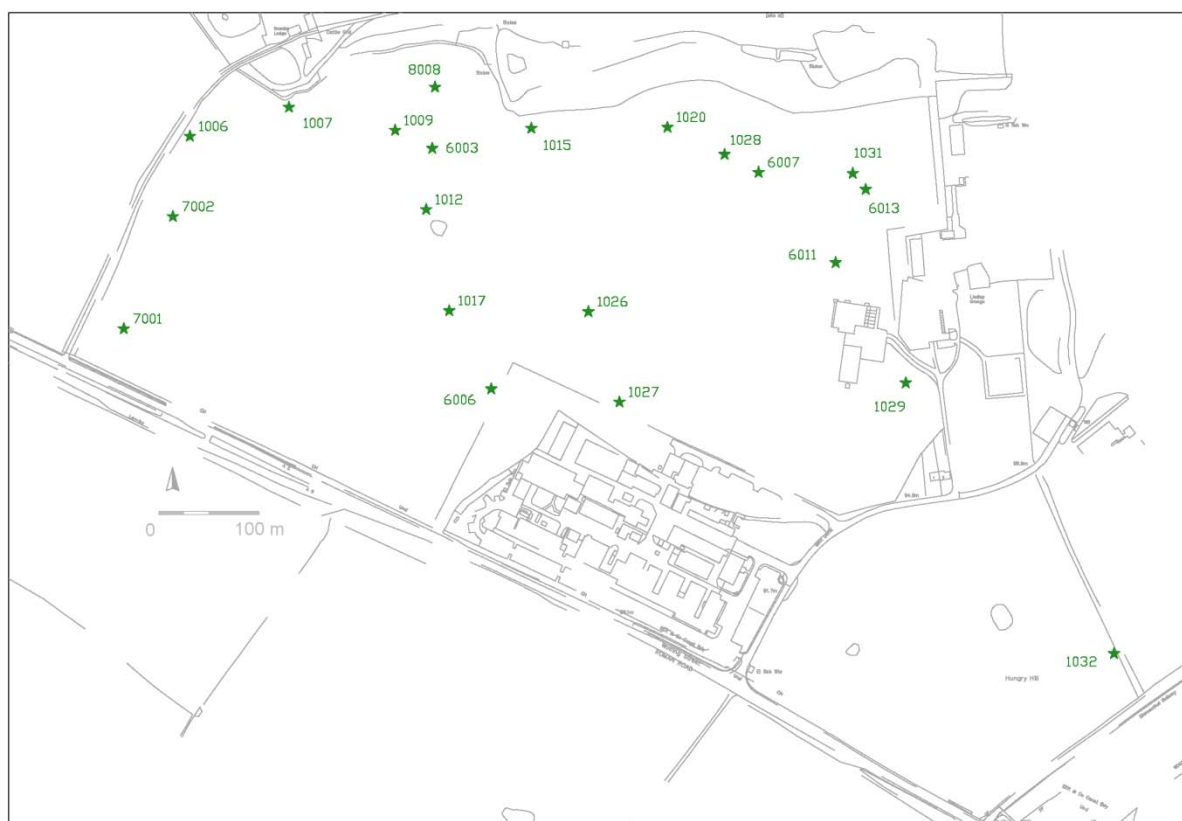


Figure 5 Southern area, post-medieval to early modern artefacts

Figure 6 Northern area, post-medieval to early modern artefacts

## **7. Discussion**

The survey identified no convincing concentrations of material which might indicate archaeological sites. The lithics scatter is sparse enough to be a background scatter and the amount of medieval /late medieval pieces is small enough to be explained as manuring scatters from nearby settlements, although there is a slight concentration in the north of the large field adjacent to the present buildings complex. The total lack of Romano-British material is slightly unexpected, given the known Roman presence in the area. A caveat is that conditions were far from ideal given the advanced stage of the crops, especially in the two northern fields, although any major concentrations should have been picked up by the survey.

## **8. Archive**

The archive consists of:

- 1 *pro-forma* fieldwalking diary sheet
- 1 annotated plan showing crop status
- 1 annotated AP showing crop status
- 1 box of lithic and non-lithic finds

The archive will be deposited with LMARS under accession code X.A43.2011 in due course.

## **9. Acknowledgements**

Project management was by Patrick Clay; the project was carried out by Steve Baker, Jen Browning, Jon Coward, and Roger Kipling, all of ULAS. ULAS would like to thank Dave Powers and the staff at MIRA for their assistance during the course of the project.

## **10. Bibliography**

Hunt, L., and Speed, G., 2011 *An archaeological desk-based assessment for land at the MIRA site, Higham-on-the-Hill, Leicestershire (SP 368 957)* ULAS Report 2010-213

***Appendix 1: The finds (non lithic)****Deborah Sawday*

The pottery, 51 sherds, weighing 725 grams, and the ceramic building material, 23 fragments, weighing 626 grams, was catalogued with reference to the ULAS fabric series (Allin 1981), (Sawday 1989), (Davies and Sawday 1999). The results are shown below, (Tables 1 and 2).

Chilvers Coton ware, which includes the late medieval Midland Purple fabric, MP1, dominated the medieval pottery and to a lesser extent, the ceramic building material assemblages. This is not unexpected, given that the pottery and tile kilns at Chilvers Coton, Nuneaton, lie only approximately 5 km to the south west. The presence of the relatively coarse Chilvers Coton fabric CC5 is of note, as unlike the other Chilvers Coton fabrics this does not seem to have a wide distribution in the county as a whole, and is rarely found in Leicester, for instance. Medieval ridge tile was found in both CC1 and MP1 (Allin 1981), and flat roof tile in CC2, including one definite, though very incomplete example of a nib tile, (Mayes and Scott 1984, fig.116), the remainder of the flat roof tile being even more fragmentary.

Table 1: The medieval and later pottery by fabric, sherd numbers and weight (grams).

<b>Fabric</b>	<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Sherds</b>	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Medieval				
PM	Potters Marston	1	18	
CC1	Chilvers Coton 1	4	38	
CC2	Chilvers Coton 2	1	1	
CC5	Chilvers Coton 5	3	17	
MP1	Midland Purple 1	6	182	
CW/MB	Cistercian/Midland Black	1	14	
Sub - Total		16	270	
Post Medieval/Modern				
EA/EA1/EA2	Coarse Earthenwares	25	319	
SW	Stoneware	3	111	
Sub - Total		28	430	
Modern				
EA10	Fine White Earthenware	5	20	
EA11	Tin Glazed Earthenware	1	1	
EA13	Jackfield/ type	1	4	
Sub - Total		7	25	
Totals		51	725	

Table 2: The medieval and later ceramic building material by fabric, fragment numbers and weight (grams).

Fabric	Common Name	Sherds	Weight	Comments
Medieval				
CC1	Chilvers Coton 1	1	62	Ridge tile
MP1	Midland Purple 1	1	30	Ridge tile
CC2	Chilvers Coton 2	6	191	Flat roof tile
Sub - Total		8	283	
Post Medieval/Modern				
EA/EA1/EA2	Coarse Earthenwares	15	343	Tile/brick/drain pipe
Sub Total		15	342	
Totals		23	626	

### Bibliography

Allin, C.E., 1981 'The Ridge Tile' in J.E. Mellor and T. Pearce, *The Austin Friars, Leicester*. London: C.B.A. Res. Rep. 35, 52-70.

Davies, S., and Sawday, D., 1999 'The Post Roman Pottery and Tile' in A. Connor and R. Buckley, 1999, *Roman and Medieval Occupation in Causeway Lane, Leicester*, Leicester Archaeology Monograph 5, 165-213.

Mayes, P., and Scott, K., 1984 *Pottery kilns at Chilvers Coton, Nuneaton*. Soc. Medieval Archaeol. Mon. Ser. 10.

Sawday, D., 1989 'The post Roman pottery', 28-41 in J.N. Lucas, 'An excavation in the north east quarter of Leicester: Elbow Lane, 1977', *Trans. Leicestershire Archaeol. and Hist. Soc.* 63, 18-47.

Table 3: The medieval and later pottery and ceramic building material by fabric, sherd numbers and weight (grams) by Find No.

Find No	Fabric/Ware	Nos	Grams	Comments
POTTERY				
1001	EA11 – Tin Glazed Earthenware	1	1	Modern
1004	EA - Earthenware	1	1	Modern – flower pot
1006	EA2	1	15	Post med/modern
1009	EA2	1	18	Post med/modern
1014	EA	1	3	Modern – flower pot
1017	EA2	1	38	Post med/modern
1018	MP – Midland Purple	1	114	Base – under-fired, glazed internally, late medieval
1019	CC5 - Chilvers Coton 5	1	5	Medieval
1020	EA2	1	15	Post medieval/modern
1021	CC2	1	1	Medieval
1022	CC1 – Chilvers Coton 1	1	6	Medieval – 1240/50+
1023	MP1 - Midland Purple 1	1	3	Late medieval, glazed externally
1026	EA2	1	36	Post med/modern
1027	EA2	2	6	Post med/modern (white bodied)

1028	EA2	1	1	Post med/modern (white bodied)
1029	EA2	1	21	Post med/modern (white bodied)
1031	EA2	1	12	Post med/modern (white bodied)
1032	EA2	1	18	Post med/modern
1033	CC1	1	6	Abraded, 1240/50+
1035	EA2	4	17	Post med/modern
1040	MP1 - Midland Purple 1	1	7	Late medieval
1038	SW - Stoneware	1	41	Post medieval
1039	CC5	1	8	Medieval, jar/bowl rim
1040	EA10 - Fine White Earthenware	1	1	Modern – transfer printed blue under glaze
6002	EA10 - Fine White Earthenware	1	1	Modern – transfer printed blue under glaze
6003	EA2	1	28	Post med/modern, bowl rim
6004	EA10	1	4	Modern
6005	EA10	1	11	Modern, bowl rim - transfer printed
6006	EA2	1	7	Post med/modern
6007	EA2	1	8	Post med/modern
6008	SW	1	6	Modern
6010	SW	1	64	Modern
6011	EA2	1	9	Post med/modern
6012	CW/MB – Cistercian/Midland Blackware	1	14	Late Med/Post med
6013	EA1 – Earthenware 1	1	14	Post Med
6015	EA10	1	3	Modern
7005	MP1	1	7	Late medieval
7008	CC5	1	4	Medieval, abraded
7011	MP1	1	28	Late medieval, jar rim
7013	PM	1	18	Medieval – 12th -13th C+
7014	EA13 – Jackfield ware/type	1	4	Modern
7015	MP1	1	23	Late medieval
7017	CC1	1	21	Medieval - 1240/50+
7018	CC1	1	5	Medieval - 1240/50+, jar rim, red slip
7019	EA2	1	8	Post med/modern
7020	EA2	1	34	Post med/modern
8008	EA2	1	10	Post med/modern
CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIAL				
1003	CC2 - Chilvers Coton 2C	1	19	Flat roof tile ?nib/peg - medieval
1005	EA	1	17	Modern tile
1007	EA	1	44	Brick, post med/modern
1012	EA	3	14	Brick, post med/modern
1013	CC2	1	15	?Tile- medieval
1015	EA	1	18	Brick, post med/modern
1016	CC1 – Chilvers Coton 1	1	62	Ridge Tile - medieval
1034	CC2	1	3	?Tile, medieval
7001	EA	1	20	Brick, post med/modern
7002	EA	1	9	Brick/tile - post med/modern
7003	EA	1	25	Drain pipe - modern
7004	EA	1	23	Modern tile
7006	EA	1	44	Modern tile
7007	EA	1	50	Modern tile
7009	CC2	1	101	Nib roof tile - with nib,

				medieval
7012	MP1	1	30	Ridge Tile – medieval
7016	CC2	1	45	?Roof tile – medieval,
8003	EA	1	43	Drain pipe - modern
8009	CC2	1	8	?Roof tile, – medieval
8010	EA	1	7	Drain pipe - modern
MISCELLANEOUS				
1002	Iron	1		Modern ?buckle
1024	Glass	1		Modern

Site/ Parish: Near Hinckley, Leics	Submitter: MIRA/J. Coward
Accession No.: XA43 2011	Identifier: D. Sawday
Document Ref: higham on the hill1.docx	Date of Identification: 31.3.11
Material: pottery/cbm/misc	Method of Recovery: field-walking
Site Type: open fields	Job Number: 11-587

## ***Appendix 2: The Lithics***

L.P. Cooper

Seven pieces of worked flint and five natural pieces were recovered. All were of local semi-translucent till-derived material. The natural pieces had secondary removals but all were irregular and most likely to have been caused by plough damage. The worked pieces were all of a flake, non-laminar, technology and are probably of a Neolithic-Bronze Age date.

1025	1ry flake
1036	Scraper (straight-edged on potlid)
1010	Natural
6016	Natural
8005	Natural
8001	Natural
1008	Flake fragment
6014	2ry flake
6009	2ry flake
1011	Flake fragment
1037	Natural
6001	Core (+/- a tested piece)



***Appendix 3: Oasis***

<b>INFORMATION REQUIRED</b>	<b>EXAMPLE</b>
Project Name	MIRA Higham on the Hill
Project Type	Fieldwalking
Project Manager	Patrick Clay
Project Supervisor	Jon Coward
Previous/Future work	Previous: ES, DBA, geophysical survey, Buildings recording. Future: unknown
Current Land Use	arable
Development Type	unknown
Reason for Investigation	PPS5
Position in the Planning Process	As a condition
Site Co ordinates	SP 368 957
Start/end dates of field work	March 2011
Archive Recipient	LMARS
Height min/max	100 - 104
Study Area	45 ha
Finds	Prehistoric, medieval, post-medieval, modern

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