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Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Fieldwalking Survey
at Bloods Hill, Kirby Muxloe, Leicestershire.
NGR: SK 52982 03937**



Gavin Speed

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**An Archaeological Fieldwalking Survey at
Bloods Hill, Kirby Muxloe, Leicestershire**

NGR: SK 52982 03937

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For: Nexus Heritage

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Summary

An archaeological fieldwalking survey was carried out by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on land at Bloods Hill, Kirby Muxloe, Leicestershire, on behalf of Nexus Heritage. The fieldwalking survey revealed very low densities scatter of worked flint, and post-medieval pottery across the survey area. The site archive will be held by Leicestershire Museums Service, under accession no XA.55.2014.

Introduction

This report presents the results of an archaeological fieldwalking survey carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) at Bloods Hill, Kirby Muxloe, Leicestershire (centred on SK 52982 03937). The work was undertaken as part of an archaeological impact assessment in advance of proposed development of the site. This report should be read in conjunction with the forthcoming Environmental Statement and the results of the geophysical survey of the site (Whittingham 2014).

Site Description, Topography and Geology

The Site extends over *c.* 53.5ha of land under agricultural use, located to the immediate east of the village of Kirby Muxloe, on the western-edge of Leicester. The Site consists of large open fields in agricultural use (arable and rough grassland) sub-divided by hedgerows. The highest point is in the centre of the site and the land descends to Kirby Muxloe to the north and to the suburban development of Leicester Forest East to the south. The north- western boundary is defined by a stream, with an associated strip of vegetation and woodland. Kirby Muxloe castle is adjacent to the site, with the village of Kirby Muxloe beyond. The site is demarcated by the M1 motorway on the east-side while the southern boundary is formed by the Leicester to Coalville railway line.

The geology of the site consists of mudstones of the Edwalton Member in the south-east, mudstones of the Gunthorpe Member in the north-west with a band of the Cotgrave Sandstone Member running between the two. The superficial deposits consist of a band of alluvium in the far south, and possibly northern edge of the survey area, with diamicton (poorly sorted sediments) deposits of the Oadby Formation and Thrussington Member in the southern and central areas. There is a section in the north of the survey area where there are no recorded superficial deposits (British Geological Survey, 2014).

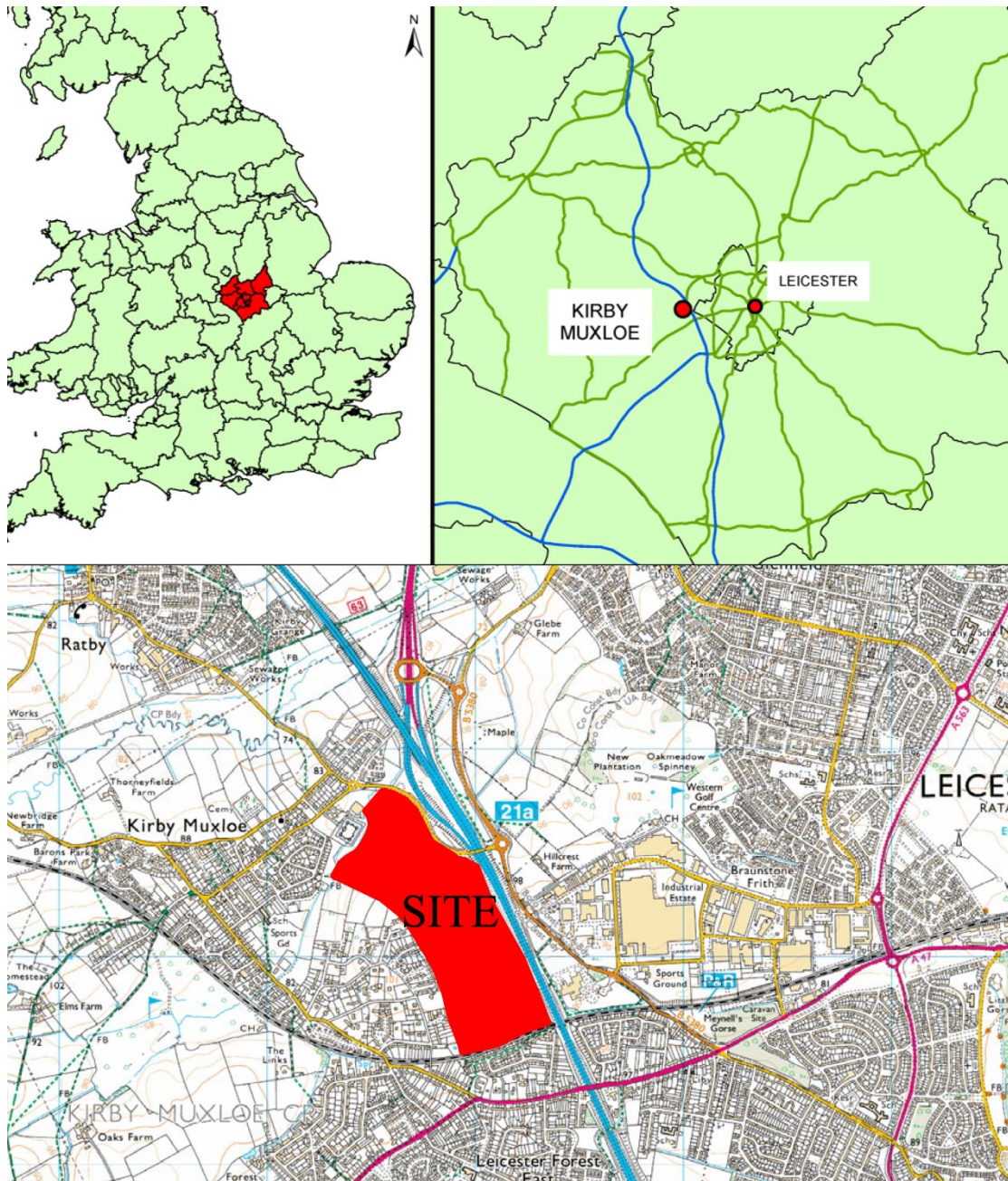


Figure 1: Site location plan

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Archaeological Background

The archaeological background will be fully investigated in a forthcoming chapter in an environmental statement by Nexus Heritage (A. Martin pers. comm.). In summary, the site lies in an area of significant archaeological activity – notably of the Iron Age and Roman periods. A cropmark has been previously interpreted as a Roman road (Mancetter Road), connecting Leicester to the small town of Mancetter (Martin 2014, Figs 3 and 4) The cropmark crosses the site on a north-east to south-west orientation (the north end of Fields 3 and 4, see Fig.10). In the immediate vicinity a number of Iron Age and Roman settlements and activity are known. Just to the west of the site two Roman coins were

discovered during fieldwalking (MLE7713). An Iron Age settlement was excavated in 1997 by ULAS at Kirby Fields, immediately adjacent to the Roman road (MLE8914). An undated enclosure (visible as a cropmark) is located just outside the south-east corner of the site, on the east-side of the M1. Of particular significance is the proximity of the site to an excavation carried out 300m north of the Site (ULAS 2014 on Figure 10). At this site an Iron Age settlement containing significant quantities of metalwork was excavated recently. Elsewhere, the Scheduled Monument of Kirby Muxloe Castle lies immediately to the north of the Site.

A geophysical survey has been completed over the entire Site by Phase Site Investigations Ltd (Whittingham 2014). The majority of the anomalies identified by this survey are thought to relate to agricultural practice / features, modern material / objects or geological / pedological variations, while the cause of some positive anomalies cannot be determined. No anomalies corresponding with the Roman road cropmark features were identified (Whittingham 2014, 2).

Aims and Methods

The overall aim of the fieldwalking survey was to gather information to establish the possible extent, character and date (as far as circumstances permit) of any potential archaeological deposits within the area to target for further archaeological evaluation.

Fieldwalking was not possible in the two northern-most fields as these had a winter crop, while the field to the far south was pasture and therefore could not be walked. The four fields walked shown below were in the centre of the site (numbered fields 1-4). The visibility during the survey was good, the crop was just through, and the weather was mixed sun and cloud. All archaeological work adhered to the Institute for Archaeologist's (IfA) *Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations*.

Post-medieval artefacts or earlier were collected and bagged along 10m transects. Clearly modern artefacts (19th-20th century) were not collected. The location of the finds were plotted using hand held GPS loggers (Garmin etrex 10, satellite accuracy *c.*3m and Garmin GPS72, satellite accuracy *c.*5m). Assuming a field of vision of 2 metres a 20% sample of the field's surface was examined. The artefact locations were logged manually on site, and plots produced using Garmin Base Camp, GPS Utility, and ArchGIS.

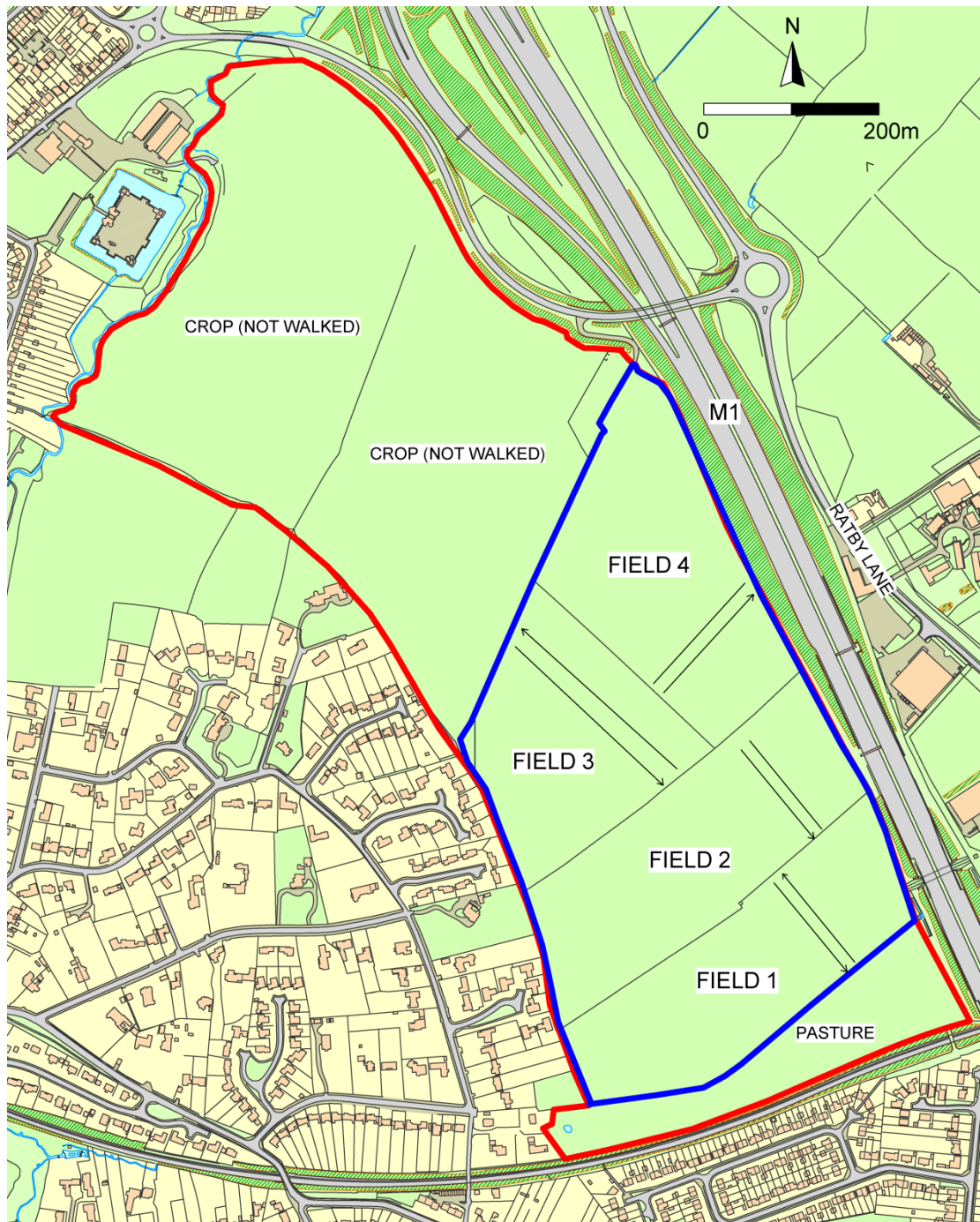


Figure 2: Plan of fields and direction of fieldwalking traverses (red line limit of development, blue line limit of fieldwalking survey)

Results

In total 39 finds were recovered, consisting of 28 worked flints of Neolithic and Bronze Age date, and a small scatter of modern pottery and ceramic building material (CBM). In view of the low numbers and dispersed nature of the finds no statistical analyses were attempted. The flint was examined by Lynden Cooper, and his identifications and summary can be found below under 'Finds'. Plots of the finds are shown below (Fig.3). The remaining finds were analysed by Nicholas Cooper and comprised post-medieval and modern pottery sherds, along with modern brick and

tile. These are likely to have resulted from the manuring of the fields in recent times. No finds of Roman or medieval date were recovered.

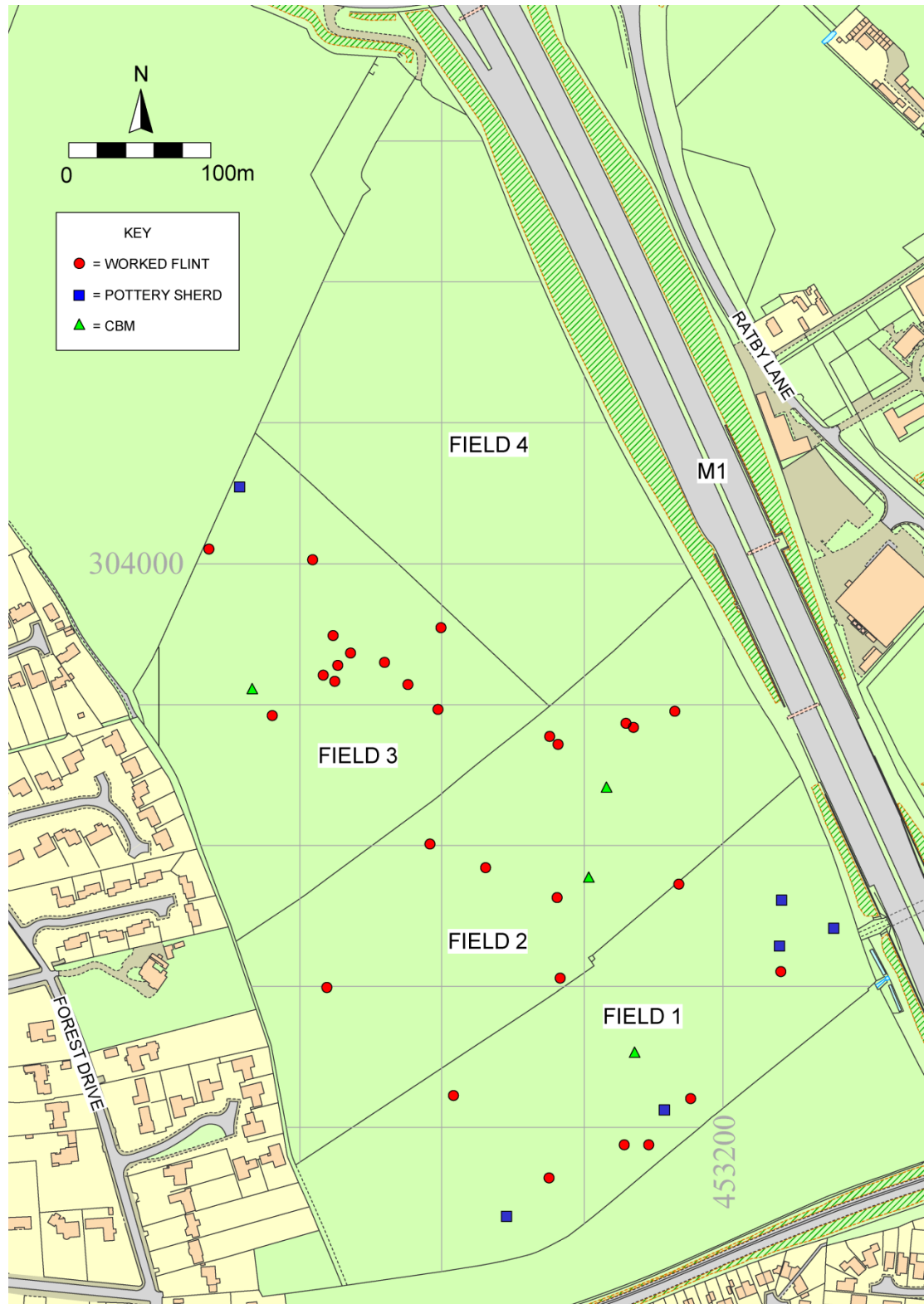


Figure 3: All finds (100m OS grid)

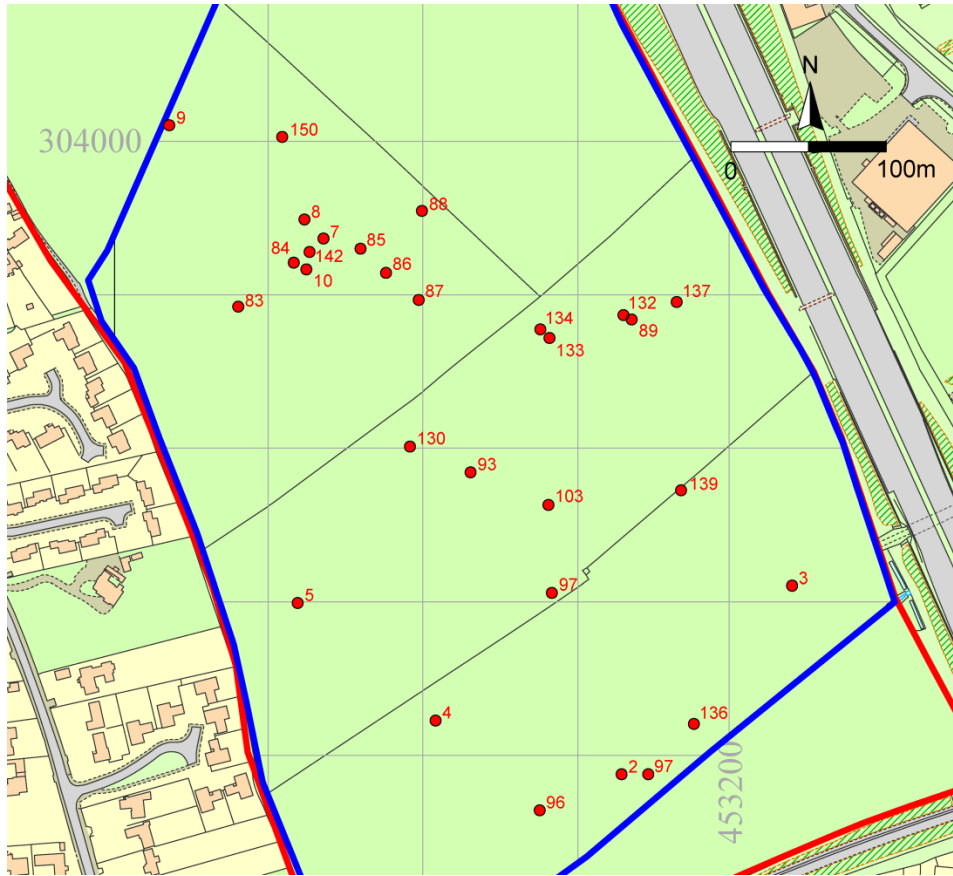


Figure 4: Distribution of worked flint (and find number)

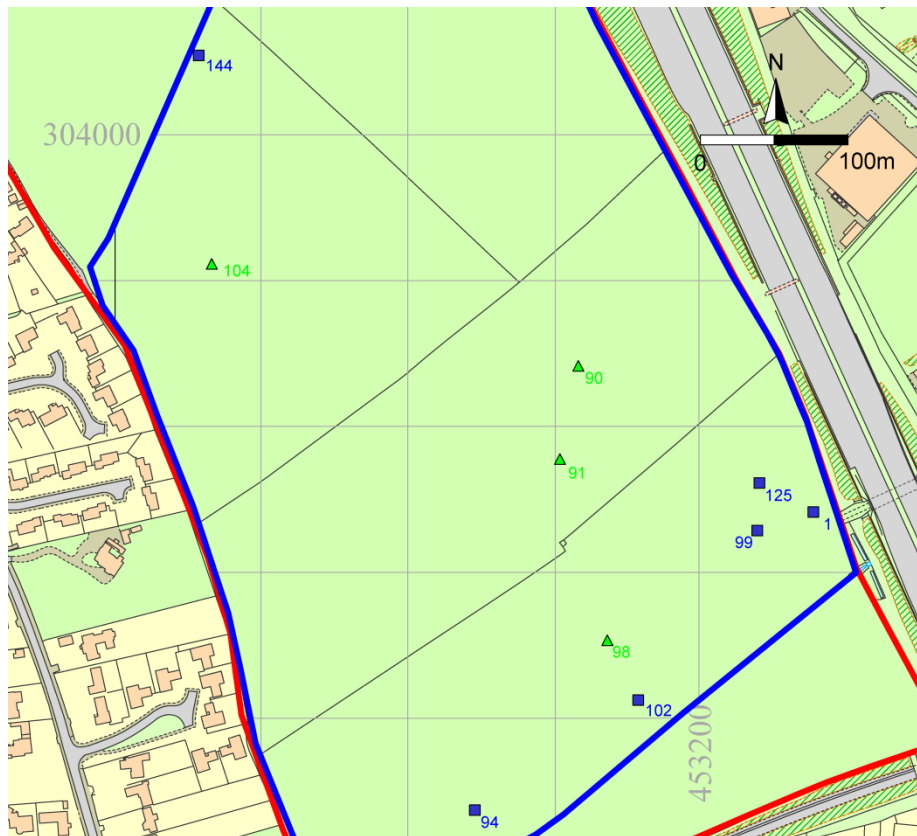


Figure 5: Distribution of post-medieval and modern pottery and tile (and find number)



Figure 6: View of Field 1



Figure 7: View of Field 2



Figure 8: View of Field 3

The Finds

The Worked Flint

Lynden Cooper

Some 28 humanly modified flints were recovered including three cores, three scrapers, and a denticulate, with the remaining débitage mostly comprising secondary and tertiary flakes. The raw material was a semi-translucent grey brown flint derived from local glacial till deposits. Technologically the collection is of hard hammer percussion mode producing flakes. A Neolithic-Bronze Age date is likely. The full record of all the finds is tabulated below.

Find	x	y	field	details
1			1	Modern flowerpot
2	453128.92	303687.94	1	core, discoidal
3	453240.06	303810.47	1	tertiary flake
4	453007.63	303722.61	1	tertiary flake
5	452917.64	303799.58	1	core (Neolithic)
7	452934.09	304037.5	3	secondary flake
8	452921.62	304049.49	3	Flake
9	452833.65	304111.13	3	Flake
10	452923.07	304017.05	3	Flake
83	452878.81	303992.74	3	secondary flake
84	452915.06	304022.44	3	Scraper
85	452958.05	304030.5	3	secondary flake
86	452974.71	304015.22	3	scraper
87	452996.46	303997.52	3	secondary flake
88	452998.69	304055.26	3	secondary flake
89	453135.32	303984.67	2	secondary flake
90			2	Modern field drain post-1730
91			2	Modern glazed tile
93	453030.19	303884.68	2	secondary flake
94			2	Post-medieval earthenware
96	453075.42	303664.39	1	secondary flake
97	453146.08	303687.76	1	secondary flake
98			1	Modern brick
99			1	Modern flowerpot
101			1	Modern pottery
102	453156.71	303712.45	1	Modern flowerpot
103	453081.09	303863.37	2	core (orthogonal)
104			3	Modern tile
125			1	Modern asbestos sheet
130	452990.52	303900.99	2	secondary bladelet
131	453083.34	303805.99	2	retouched flake
132	453130.31	303987.16	2	tertiary bladelet
133	453081.73	303972.17	2	tertiary flake
134	453081.73	303972.17	2	tertiary flake

136	453176.46	303720.56	1	secondary flake
137	453164.6	303995.55	2	scraper
139	453167.83	303872.99	1	tertiary flake
142	452924.91	304028.21	3	scraper
144			3	Modern tile
150	452907.03	304103.11	3	denticulate

The Pottery and Ceramic building material (CBM) Nicholas J. Cooper

The identifications are tabulated above. A single sherd of post-medieval or modern earthenware was recovered from Field 2 together with four sherds of modern flowerpot, five fragments of modern tile and field drain and one of modern asbestos sheet. This scatter is the result of modern farming activity from the 18th to 20th century.

Conclusions

The fieldwalking survey was undertaken during good conditions with no impediments to visibility. The southern fields (1-4) had been harrowed and weathered while crop growth was limited enabling the surfaces of the fields to be viewed clearly (Figures 6-8) and the aims of the survey addressed.

Although the site extends over the projected alignment of a Roman road and known Iron Age and Roman settlement activity (see Figure 10), the fieldwalking survey has revealed evidence only for a very low scatter of 28 worked flint of Neolithic-Bronze Age date in three of four fields. These comprise seven tools (25%) and 21 waste flakes and are most likely represents ‘non-site’ artefact loss rather than evidence for settlement or ritual activity. There is a moderately higher level of worked flint in field 3, close to the Roman road. The results are typical of dispersed fieldwalking assemblages located in plough-zone areas. Experimental artefact simulation has demonstrated that dispersal is a continual process which can be a very significant factor in the interpretation of scatters especially flint material which may have been subject to intermittent plough disturbance over several millennia (Yorston *et al* 1990, 67).

The remaining finds observed comprised post-medieval and modern pottery sherds and modern brick fragments which are likely to have resulted from manuring spreads being added to the fields.

Archive

Fieldwork was carried out by Gavin Speed, Adam Clapton, Donald Clarke, and Andy McLeish. The flint was identified by Lynden Cooper. Patrick Clay managed the project.

The site archive will be held by Leicestershire Museums Service, under accession no XA.55.2014.

The archive contains:

- Survey notes and plans
- Digital photos on CD
- 1 box of finds

- CD containing this report
- Unbound copy of this report

The report is listed on the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) held by the Archaeological Data Service at the University of York. Available at: <http://oasis.ac.uk/> under Oasis ID: universi1-xxxxx.

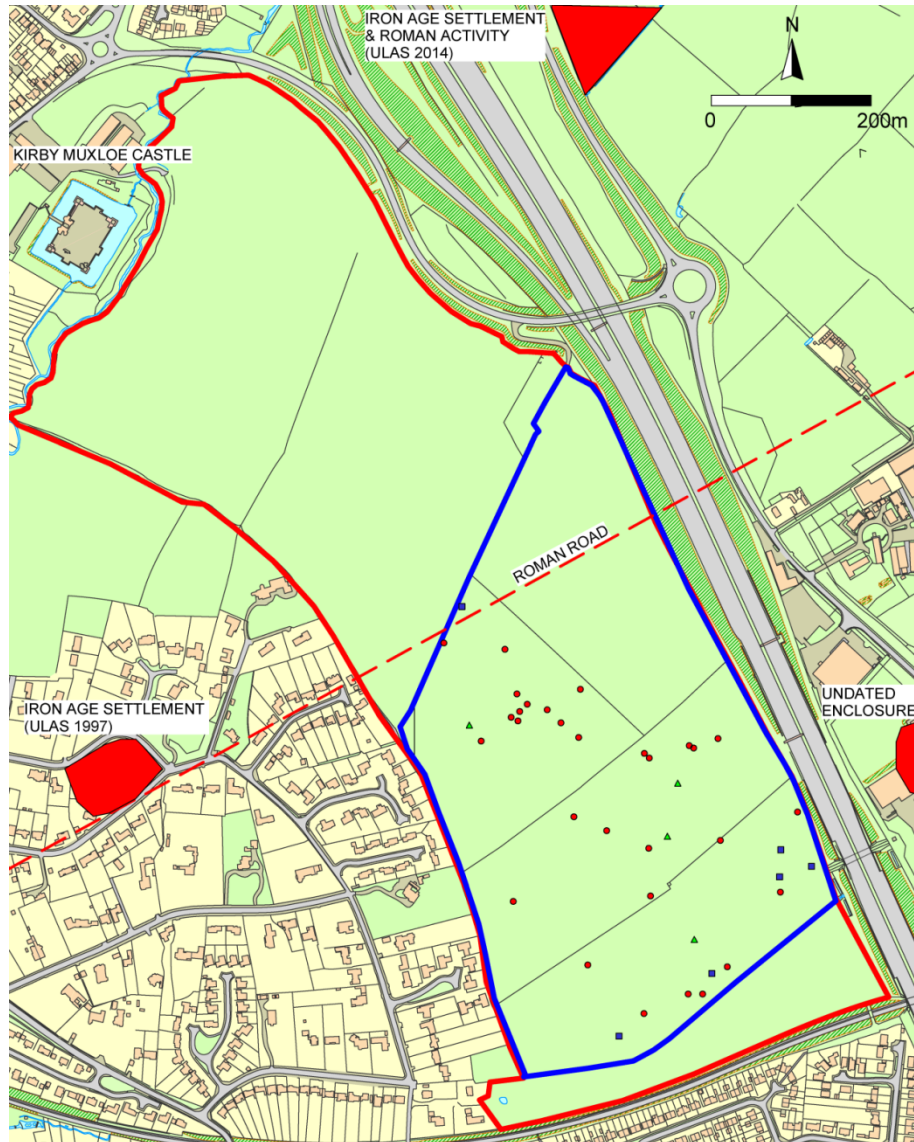


Figure 9: Finds distribution from fieldwalking in relation to projected Roman road, and other significant archaeological discoveries in the area

ID	OASIS entry summary
Project Name	Bloods Hill, Kirby Muxloe, Leicestershire
Summary	The fieldwalking survey revealed a very low density scatter of worked flint, a very low level of post-medieval pottery was observed across the survey area.

Project Type	Fieldwalking
Project Manager	Patrick Clay
Project Supervisor	Gavin Speed
Previous/Future work	Previous: geophysics. / Future: uncertain.
Current Land Use	Agricultural farmland
Development Type	Housing
Reason for Investigation	NPPF
Position in the Planning Process	Pre-application
Site Co ordinates	SK 52982 03937
Post-code	LE92EZ
Height (metres above O.D.)	80-100
Start/end dates of field work	10/024/2014 – 11/04/2014
Archive Recipient	Leicestershire Museums Service
Study Area	53.5ha
Associated project reference codes	Museum accession ID: XA.55.2014

Bibliography

Martin, A. 2014, *Land at Bloods Hill, Kirby Muxloe, Leicestershire. Written Scheme of Investigation for a Surface Artefact Collection Survey*. Nexus Heritage document 3148.R01, 7/4/2014

IfA, 2006 *Code of Conduct*

Whittingham, M. 2014, *Bloods Hill, Kirby Muxloe, Leicestershire. Archaeological Geophysical Survey*. Phase Site Investigations Ltd, report ARC/1216/436, 10/4/2014.

Yorston, R.M., Gaffney, V.L., and Reynolds, P.J 1990 Simulation of Artefact Movement due to cultivation *Journal of Archaeological Science* **17**, 67-83.

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