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A Metal Detector Survey for land at MIRA-TICIT development proposal (Field 3), Higham on the Hill Parish, Leicestershire

SP 36965 97570

Matthew Beamish

ULAS Report No 2018-099

A Metal Detector Survey for
Land at MIRA-TICIT development proposal (Field 3).
Higham on the Hill Parish, Leicestershire

NGR: SP 36965 97570

Matthew Beamish

For: Horiba-MIRA Ltd.

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A Metal Detector Survey for Land at MIRA-TICIT development proposal Higham on the Hill Parish, Leicestershire

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Summary

A metal detector survey was carried out from the 5th to 6th May 2018 by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) for Horiba-MIRA Ltd. on land at MIRA Business Park, Nuneaton CV10 0TT. One arable located in the northwest of the park was surveyed in advance of proposed development of the site.

The metal detecting was undertaken by members of the Ambion Historical and Archaeological Research Group who have metal detected extensive areas locally and whose work within a project commissioned by Leicestershire County Council and lead by Dr Glenn Foard, resulted in the registration of redefined battlefield area in 2013.

Eleven pieces were recorded during the survey. Of these one musket ball may possibly be derived from the 1485 battle but equally may derive from other activity included the Civil War skirmish known to have occurred over the same fields in 1644.

Two flint thumbnail scrapers of probably Early Bronze Age date were recovered in close proximity to one another on the west side of the field.

The site archive will be deposited with Leicestershire County Museum under Accession Number X.A21.2018.

Introduction

This document forms the report of a metal detector survey on land for a proposed new High Speed Limit Handling Facility at MIRA, near Higham on the Hill, Leicestershire (Fig. 1). The survey was commissioned by Swanvale Developments on behalf of Horiba-MIRA Ltd. from University of Leicester Archaeological Services in advance of proposed development of the site. Associated works will include the construction of a track and testing ground with roadways, control structures, landscaping and buried services.

The metal detector survey is part of a pre-determination archaeological scheme of investigation along with a desk-based assessment (Hunt 2018) and fieldwalking survey (González Rodríguez 2018), LiDAR study (Beamish 2018) and geophysical survey (Tanner 2018) aimed to inform further evaluation of the assessment area. This survey follows a previous metal detector survey of fields 1,2,4,5 and 6 (Gonzalez Rodriguez et al., 2018)

Site Description, Topography and Geology

The proposed application covers an area of approximately 33.3 hectares and comprises 8 fields, including three of permanent pasture (Fig. 2). The development is located within the parishes of Higham on the Hill and Witherley, in the District of Hinckley and Bosworth, Leicestershire, around 5 miles north-west of Hinckley and 5 miles south-east of Atherstone (Fig 1). The line

of the Roman Mancetter Road (now Fenn Lanes) forms the northern boundary to the site while the A5 Roman Watling Street forms the southern boundary of the overall MIRA site and also the Warwickshire border. Fields 1, 2 and 3 are flat open fields on the north side of the proposed development currently under young crop and surrounded by hedgerows with wire fences within. Fields 5 and 6 are currently pasture for horses.

The site lies at a height of approximately 100m above OD, with the high point of the site lying at 107m above OD close to the southern edge falling to 96m aOD at the northern edge.

The British Geological Survey of England and Wales Sheet 169 (Coventry) shows that the underlying geology over most of the site is likely to be 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.

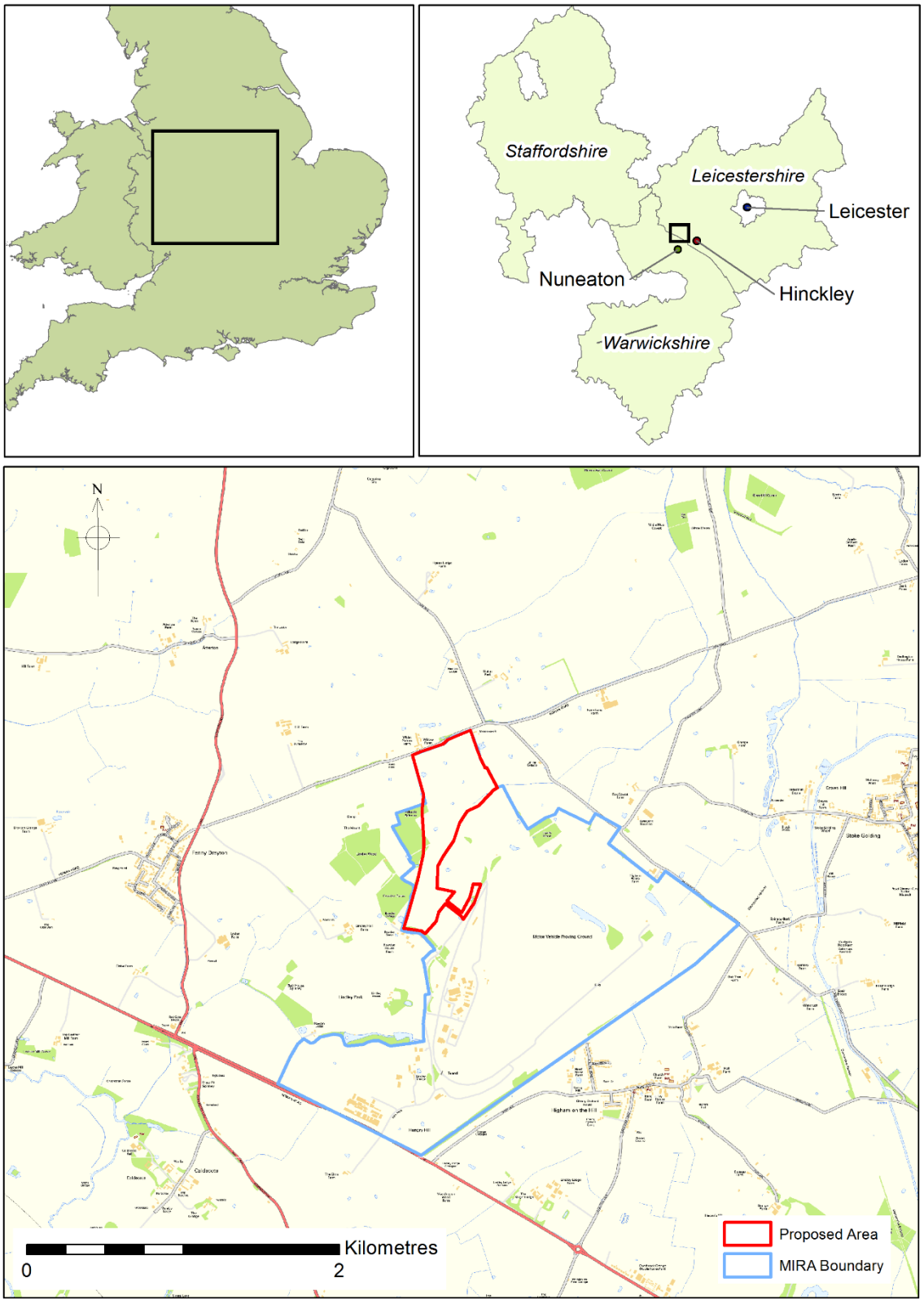

Figure 1. Location of MIRA

Historical and Archaeological Background

The assessment area is located in the parish of Higham on the Hill, which covers the village of Higham and Lindley and Rowden, two deserted hamlets. The name Higham is of Anglo-Saxon origin meaning 'the high farm or enclosure', although not mentioned in the Domesday survey of 1086. The village is known to be a possession of Hugo de Gretensmainell just after the Roman conquest, and through him the property descended to the Earls of Leicester and Winton. The parish includes the hamlet of Lindley that was mentioned in the Domesday Book and gave its name to the RAF Lindley site which occupied the site before MIRA, which was set up in 1945.

Archaeological background

The Historic Environment Record (HER) for Leicestershire and Rutland records that there are three sites recorded as lying within the MIRA-TIC-IT site. These are part of the former Nuneaton Airfield that now makes up the main proving ground on the MIRA site (**MLE15973**), two brick buildings, probably associated with the airfield, which were revealed during a trial trench evaluation in 2011 (**MLE19862**) and the findspots for a number of finds from several periods found during metal detecting across the area during 2010-2011 (**MLE19863**).

The proposed area includes part of the western edge of the registered battlefield of Bosworth Field (Figure 6). The battle was one of the last of the War of the Roses and ended rule of the Plantagenet dynasty with the death of Richard III and brought the Tudor dynasty to the throne.

The area was also the site of a Civil war skirmish in 1644.

Five metal detector surveys have been carried out in the vicinity of the assessment area related to Bosworth battlefield. Metal detector surveying in conjunction with fieldwalking was first used at Bosworth in 1995-6 by Leicestershire County Council in an attempt to prove the battle had been fought on Ambion Hill. Despite inadequacies on the recording and surveying methodology, the finds recovered from this survey were not of significance. A second survey of the area was undertaken between 1999-2002 using a 'random wander' method and sketching spotfinds of 'significant' finds. A further survey was carried out in 2002-3 with the support the Hinckley Metal Detecting Group. Detecting was resumed by Leicestershire County Council in 2004-5, yet the unsystematic to surveying, find recording and overall methodological inaccuracies made the data uncovered unusable from an archaeological perspective.

The Battlefield Project undertaken in 2010 (Foard and Curry 2013) located more finds over the battlefield area including a large amount of metalwork including a halberd, cannonballs, badges and rings Nearly 40 roundshot ballistics which are indisputable evidence of the 1485 conflict are distributed over an area 1900m west-east and 1100m north-south (Figure 6). This assemblage of roundshot is the he largest ever found on a European battlefield (MLE3234).

Aims of the Metal Detector survey

The aim of the survey is to determine the presence of battlefield related artefacts in the proposed development area. The objectives are to survey the fields of the proposed area that are within or are adjacent to the battlefield area.

Methodology

In order to provide comparable data with existing one, the metal detector survey was undertaken by a team of experienced metal detectorist using the same methodology used in the 2010 Bosworth project (Foard and Curry 2013).

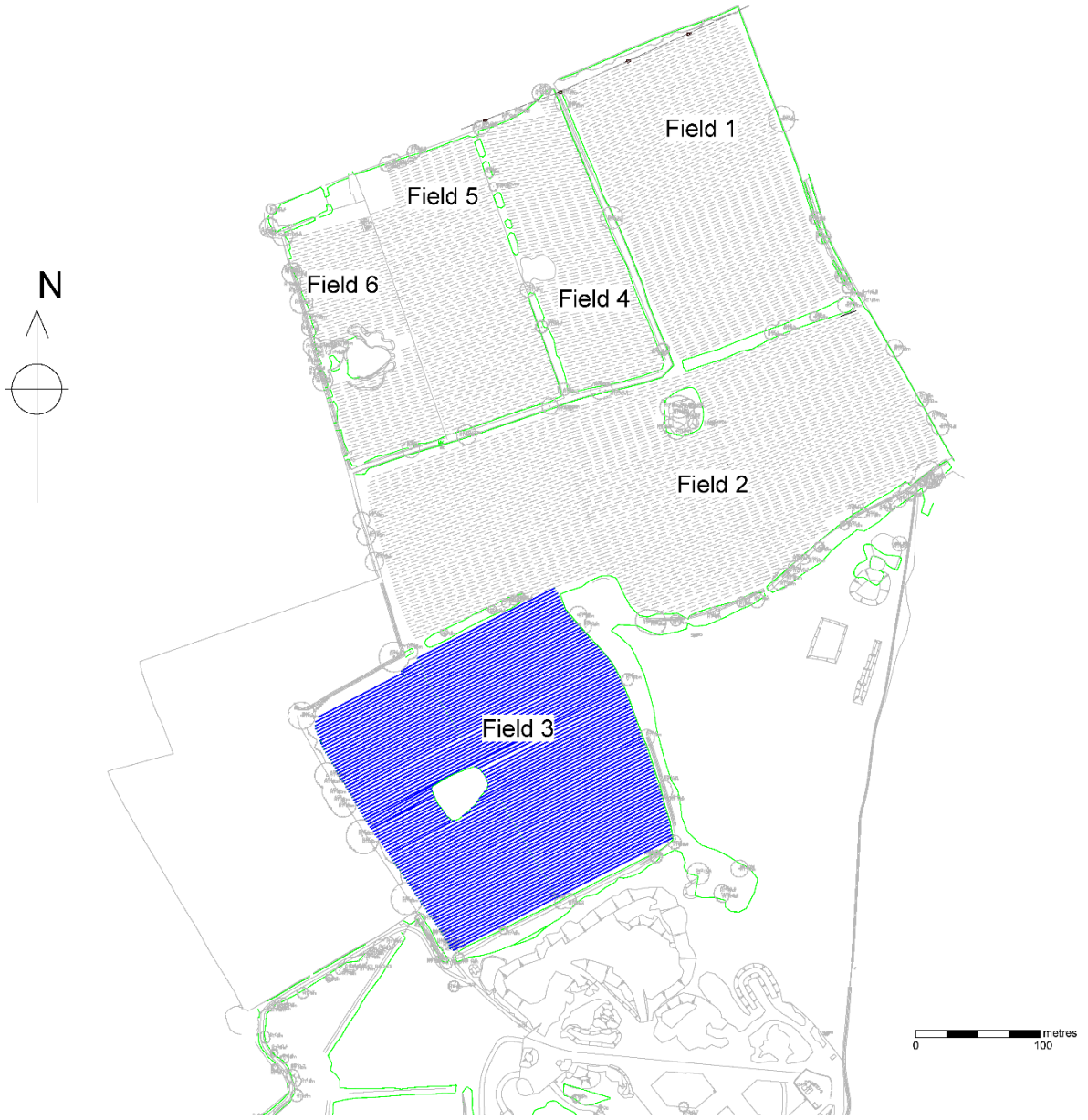

Figure 2: Field numbers and walked transects. Transects in grey were surveyed previously (Gonzalez Rodriguez et al., 2018, ULAS Report 2018-061)

2.5m transects were laid out across each field using coloured flags (yellow, purple and green). Detectorists walked along the line of the transect scanning the ground with detectors set to discriminate against ferrous material.

If a signal was found, a hole was excavated using hand-spade and trowel and the source of the signal found.

Modern material and late Post-Medieval material (e.g. coins of the late 18th Century) were retained but not plotted. Finds that had any potential to contribute to the battlefield research were retained and the findspots recorded with RTK GPS.

The metal detecting was undertaken by Barry Wright, Carl Dawson, Pete Riley, Richard Mackinder and Simon Harrison. Matthew Beamish joined the detectorists on the 6th May. An RTK GPS was used to record transects and findspots by Mireya Gonzalez Rodriguez.

Results

Surveys were undertaken over the weekend of the 5th-6th May 2018. There was free access to the fields which is covered by an arable.

Weather conditions were fine and dry. In parts of the east of the field the crop was thicker and taller than elsewhere, and formed an impediment to the detector heads requiring the detectors to be forced rather than swung through the detection arc. This had an effect of slowing down the survey rate. The northern edge of the field was slightly waterlogged. It was considered that conditions for the survey were conducive for successful detection.

Figure 3: Detecting in Field 3

Figure 4: Detecting in Field 3.

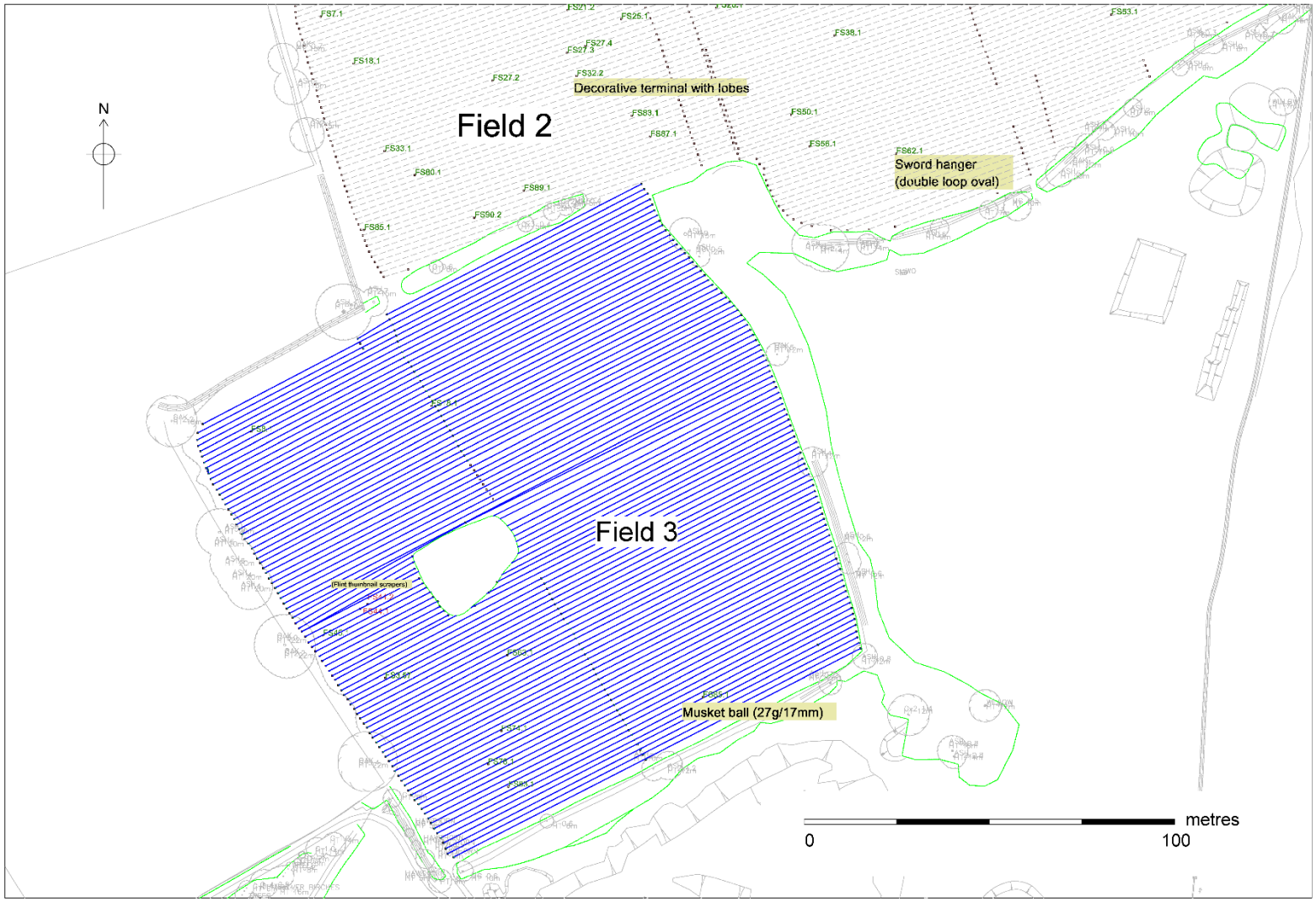

Figure 5: Selected finds from Field 3 and previous surveys (Gonzalez Rodriguez et al. 2018, ULAS Report 2018-061).

The metal detected finds from 18-950 (Field 3) MIRA XA21.2018

Nicholas J. Cooper

A total of 11 'find-spotted' metal and flint objects were recovered during the survey of Field 3 (Table 1).

Table 1. Significant objects from the metal detector survey

Metal detected finds from 18-950 MIRA TICIT XA21.2018 Field 3					
Field	**Find spot**	**ID no.**	**Finder**	**Material**	**Description and date**
3	8.1	24	RM	Cu Alloy	Cast, tapered shaft with moulding, stub of tang centrally. Length 40mm. Post-med.
3	18.1	20	RM	Silver	Thimble. Regular grid of dimples. Scroll-decorated lower zone. Post-med. No hall mark.
3	44.1	030	SR	Flint	Thumbnail scraper. Late Neo-Early Bronze Age
3	44.2	029	SR	Flint	Thumbnail scraper. Late Neo-Early Bronze Age
3	45.1	019	PR	Lead	Disc weight 21g or 0.75 oz. Diam.24mm
3	57.1	012	BW	Lead	Disc weight (damaged) 45g. Diam.32mm
3	63.1	018	SR	Cu Alloy	Shoe buckle frame fragment 18th cent.
3	74.1	008	PR	Cu Alloy	Sheet disc inscribed ELEY LONDON. Diameter 20mm. Modern.
3	78.1	009	PR	Lead	Dome-shaped working waste
3	83.1	4	RM	Lead	Disc weight 56g or 2 oz. Diam.27mm
3	85.1	WP46	C Rich	Lead	Musket ball. Diam. 17mm. 27g. 15th-19th cent.

Only one item, a musket ball from 85.1, is potentially linked to the battlefield. Specialist analysis will be needed to confirm if this is the case. Prehistoric activity is represented by two flint thumbnail scrapers found within 4m of each other (41.1 and 2). The three lead disc weights are likely to be of later or post-medieval date. In addition, a large number of 'scrap' items were also recovered and scanned for identification, but all were of 20th-century date and nothing significant was recorded; none were retained in the finds archive.

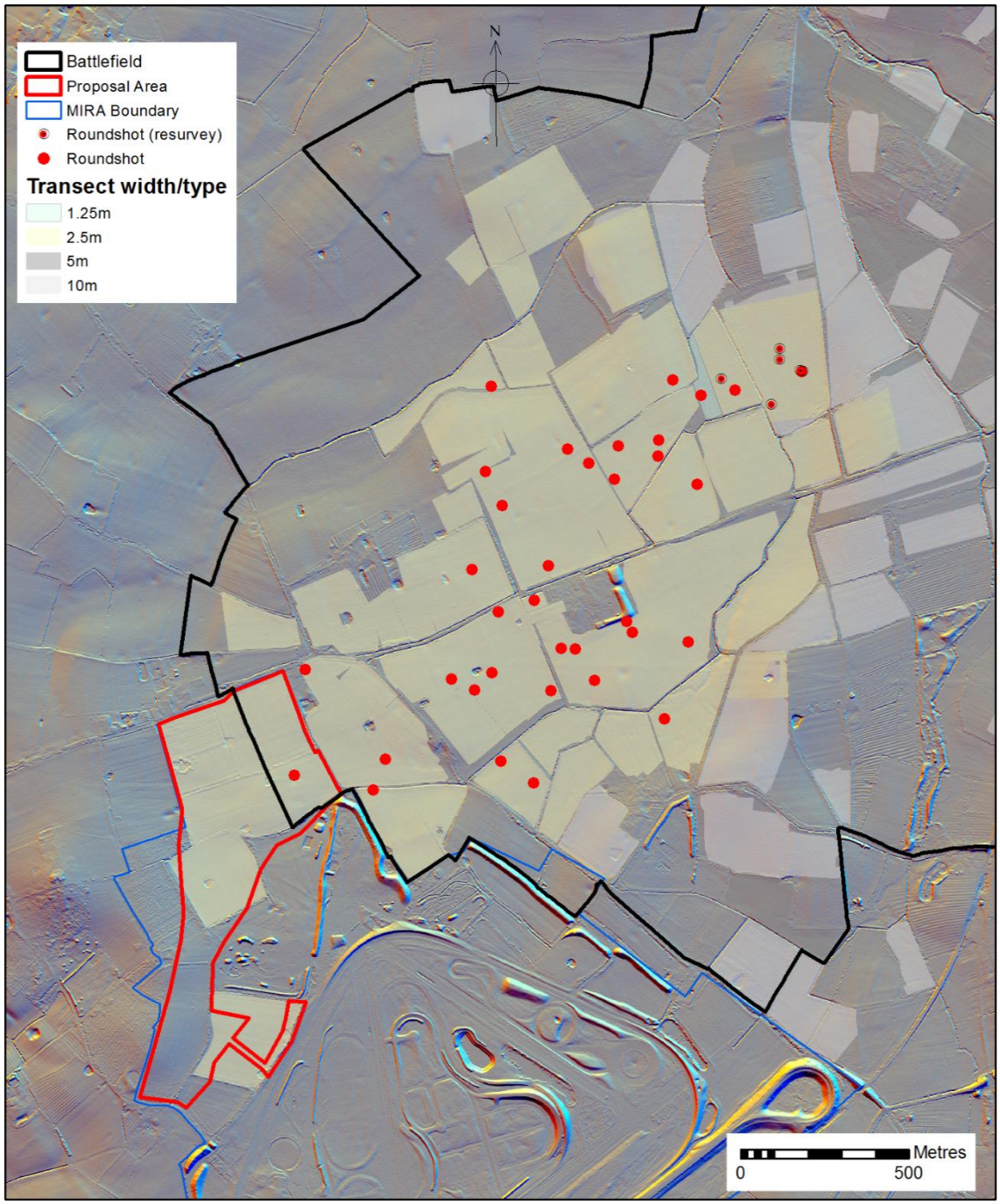

Figure 6: Roundshot from the Bosworth battlefield project survey, transect survey information, an area resurveyed in 2017 to the north-east, and the find of round-shot from a previous survey undertaken as part of the current proposal along with terrain information

Conclusion

Metal detector survey on 2.5m transects was undertaken across one field in the north of the proposed area. The methodology of the work was consistent with the preferred methodology from the Bosworth Battlefield Project (Foard and Curry 2013, p104-106) and the personnel that undertook the work were experienced in battlefield metal detector survey. Weather conditions were perfect. Soil conditions were good although a young crop on the west side of the field served to slow the survey pace.

Nine metal finds were recorded. Of these, one musket ball could relate to the 1485 battle but s not reliable as an indicator as it may have been fired or lost at any number of other events.

Two flint thumbnail scrapers were recovered close proximity to each other on the west side of the field and these probably represent activity in the Late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age.

Archive and Publications

The archive will be prepared in line with appropriate professional guidelines (e.g. UKIC and ADS guidelines for the preparation of archaeological archives for long term storage and *Archaeological Archives: A Guide to Best Practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation* (Brown 2008).

A copy of the report shall be submitted to the Leicestershire Historic and Environment Records (HER) as a single bound copy with PDF/A on a CD, the completed OASIS record (Appendix I) and digital images. Leicestershire County Museum shall receive the full archive for deposition Accession Number X.A21.2018.

The site archive consists of:

PHYSICAL	1 x box of finds
PAPER	x ULAS pro forma Recording Sheets 1x unbound copy of this report
DIGITAL	1 CD-R with x digital photographs; excel file with a copy of the site indices; a PDF_A copy of this report

A version of this report and excavation summary will appear in due course in the *Transactions the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society.* The University of Leicester Archaeological Services supports the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) project. The online OASIS data entry has been completed detailing the results of the project (see Appendix I of this report). This is digitally accessible through The Archaeological Data Services (http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/).

Acknowledgements

Thanks are extended to Nigel Chalkley of MIRA for his cooperation and help during our fieldwork, and the security staff for their interest in our work. Many thanks to the detectorists Richard Mackinder, Pete Riley, Carl Dawson, Barry Wright and especially to Simon Richardson who travelled to the site from North Yorkshire to help complete the work. Mireya González Rodríguez undertook the surveying of the work. All staff gave up a weekend to get the work done. Thanks in particular to Richard Mackinder for again acting as liaison for the Ambion Group. The project was managed by Matthew Beamish.

Thanks to Nick Cooper for promptly reporting the finds.

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Appendix I. OASIS Data Entry

PROJECT DETAILS	**OASIS ID**	Universi1-377722		
	Project Name	Archaeological Metal Detector Survey on Land at MIRA-TICIT		
	Start/end dates of field work	5.05.2018 -06.05.2018		
	Previous/Future Work	Yes/Yes		
	Project Type	Recording Project: Metal detector survey		
	Site Status	English Heritage Historic Battlefields Register		
	Current Land Use	Cultivated Land		
	Monument Type/Period	Battlefield/Medieval		
	Significant Finds/Period	Metalwork – Medieval/Post Medieval		
	Development Type	Industrial		
	Reason for Investigation	NPPF		
	Position in the Planning Process	Pre-application		
	Planning Ref.	N/A		
PROJECT LOCATION	**Site Address/Postcode**	MIRA Business Park, Nuneaton CV10 0TT		
	Study Area	4.8ha.		
	Site Coordinates	SP 36965 97570		
	Height OD	Min. 96m aOD; Max 107m aOD		
PROJECT CREATORS	**Organisation**	University of Leicester Archaeological Services		
	Project Brief Originator	County Archaeologist		
	Project Design Originator	Matthew Beamish		
	Project Manager	Matthew Beamish		
	Project Director/Supervisor	Mireya González		
	Sponsor/Funding Body	Horiba-MIRA		
PROJECT ARCHIVE	**Recipient**	**PHYSICAL**	**DIGITAL**	**PAPER**
		Leicestershire County Museums	Leicestershire County Museums	Leicestershire County Museums
	ID (Acc. No.)	X.A21.2018	X.A21.2018	X.A21.2018
	Contents	Metalwork	Digital Photography Spreadsheets Survey Text	Context Sheet Plan Report
PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	**Type**	Grey Literature		
	Title	A Metal Detector Survey for Land (Field 3) at MIRA-TICIT development proposal Higham on the Hill, Leicestershire		
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	Date	2018		
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