

# Ambrey Archaeology

Metal Detecting Survey

at

Malthouse Farm,

Uckinghall,

Worcestershire

WSM77323

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## Metal detecting Survey at Malthouse Farm, Uckinghall, Worcestershire

### Summary

Ambrey Archaeology carried out an archaeological metal detecting survey ahead of a proposed development at Malthouse Farm, Uckinghall, Worcestershire (SO 86734 38434). The development, which comprised the construction of a manege, was considered to have the potential to impact on heritage assets, including the site of the civil war battle of Ripple which took place in 1643. The proposed manege is located approximately 250m to the east of cropmarks of a probable Iron Age/Romano British settlement. There are also ridge and furrow earthworks located within the field in which the manege will be constructed.

A programme of archaeological work comprising a metal detecting survey and archaeological report was required by Malvern Hill District Council prior to construction as a condition of planning.

The metal detecting survey was carried out on the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2021. A grid was established across the area of the proposed manege and the proposed development site was systematically investigated. In the course of the survey several iron finds were recovered from topsoil, but all are thought to be modern. No finds or features of archaeological significance were recorded.

## 1. Introduction

Ambrey Archaeology was commissioned by Alex Feetham to carry out an archaeological metal detecting survey of a proposed development at Malthouse Farm, Uckinghall, Worcestershire (NGR 386736 , 238433; Figure 1). The development comprises construction of an all-weather riding arena/manege at the site, for which planning permission has been granted with conditions by Malvern Hills District Council (20/01062/CU).

The proposed development had the potential to impact on heritage assets (WSM12993 - the site of the battlefield of Ripple, 1643 and WSM01437 – cropmarks indicative of occupation north of Malthouse Farm) and a metal detecting survey and archaeological report was required. Ridge and furrow earthworks (WSM46919) are also recorded within the field of the proposed development. The site also falls within Areas of Palaeolithic Potential (WSM56937 & WSM56950) due to its situation on river terrace gravels.

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared (Ambrey Archaeology 2021) and approved by Aidan Smyth, archaeological advisor to Malvern Hills District Council.

The metal detecting survey was carried out on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2021. No finds or features of archaeological significance were recorded.

## 2. Location, topography and geology

The site (Plates 1 and 2, Figures 1 & 2) is located in a field to the north of Malthouse Farm, on the northern edge of the hamlet of Uckinghall in the valley of the River Severn, approximately 500m to the east of the river. A hedgerow runs about 10m to the east of the site, along an unnamed road which runs south into the hamlet.

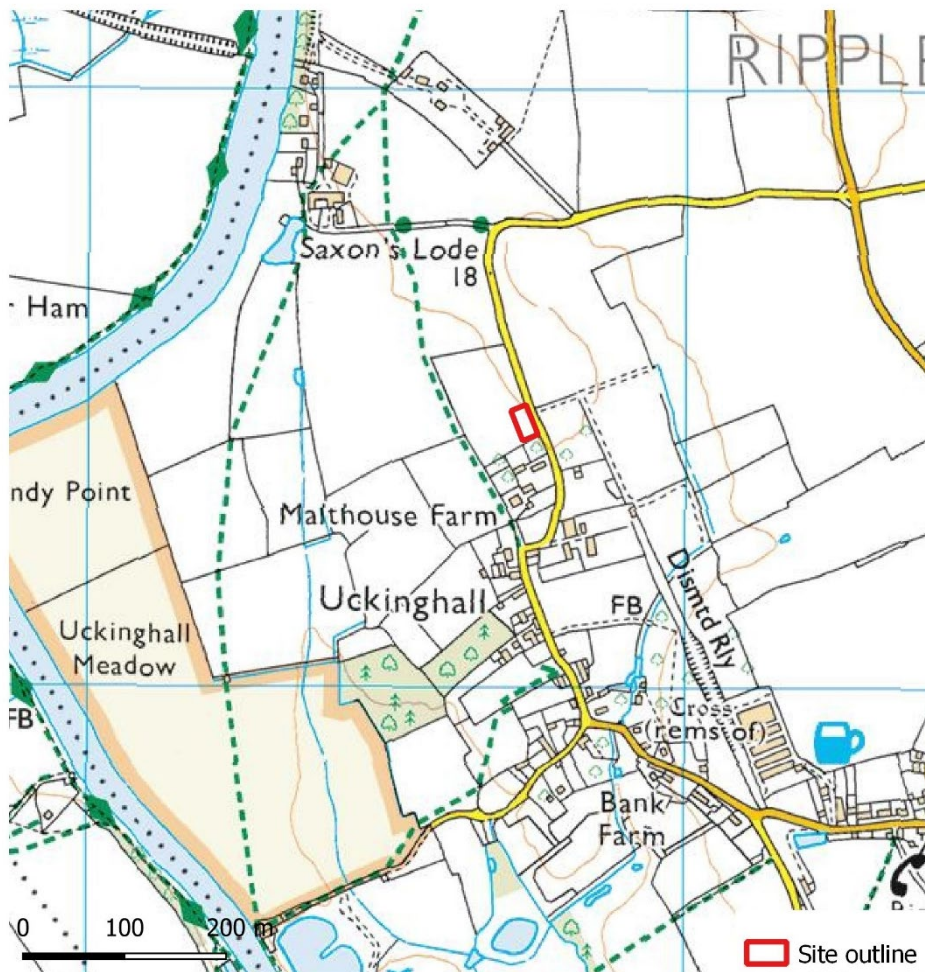
The site is located in flat land which has previously been cultivated but has recently been reseeded for pasture. Bedrock at the site is mudstone of the Sidmouth Formation, which is overlain with superficial river terrace deposits of Worcester Member sand and gravel (BGS 2021).



*Plate 1: The site of the proposed manege from the south-west*



Plate 2: The site of the proposed manege from the north-north-west





*Figure 1: Site location*

OS 1:25000 Explorer digital mapping © Crown copyright and database rights [2021]



*Figure 2: Proposed location of manege*

### 3. Archaeological background

#### Prehistoric

Due to its location on river terrace sands and gravels, the site is considered to be in two Areas of Palaeolithic Potential (WSM56937 & WSM56950). Similar deposits at other locations within the county have yielded palaeo-environmental, artefactual, human and faunal remains.

A possible Bronze Age round barrow (WSM01320) about 230m to the north of the site was identified as a crop mark from aerial photographs.

An Iron Age/Romano-British settlement site (WSM01437) is visible as cropmarks on aerial photographs, about 240 – 260m to the west and north-west of the site. The cropmarks comprise two conjoined incomplete rectilinear enclosures with curved corners and a further rectangular enclosure to the south, as well as a trackway and a number of pits.

#### Medieval

Uckinghall is a documented medieval settlement, the placename, which has a personal element, was first documented in the 11<sup>th</sup> century (WSM25271). Several patches of ridge and furrow earthworks have been identified within the search area, including (WSM10238), with earthworks running north-west by south-east, partially within the field of the proposed development site.

#### Post-Medieval

The Civil War Battle of Ripple (WSM12993) took place in April 1643, in which the Parliamentarian general William Waller (an experienced tactician known as ‘William the Conqueror’) was defeated by the Royalist forces under Prince Maurice. The battle, particularly in its early stages, may have been fought on or close to the proposed development site. A detailed description of the battle is provided by Malcolm Atkin (Atkin 1995, 45-49) and this account is summarised here.

The battle focused on a hill known locally as Ordnance Hill or Old Nan’s Hill, which is located to the north of the village of Ripple between the hamlet of Uckinghall and Ripple Brook and was on the day of the battle occupied by the Parliamentarians under Waller.

About 2000 Royalist troops under Prince Maurice were formed in Ripple Field at the foot of the hill, in an area known later as ‘Deadland Furlong’ and ‘Scarlett Close’. An account of the battle held that the usually tactically brilliant Waller, had on this occasion ‘neither shot prepared nor cannons that understood the business’. Although he had the advantage of high ground, he was in danger of encirclement, as Royalist musketeers were hidden in the hedgerows of Ripple field.

Waller decided to retreat to Ripple, possibly to tempt Maurice into an ambush in the narrow lanes which led there. However, before this could be put into action, the Royalists’ cavalry ascended Nan’s Hill from Uckinghall and used their position and the advantage of the sun behind them to attack. The surprise attack panicked the Parliamentarians and they retreated in complete disorder.

The flow of the Royalists was said to have been stemmed partially by a quick-thinking soldier who managed to take a gate off its hinges and put it across a lane. Colonel Massey arrived with reinforcements who were also attacked by the Royalists, and it was not until more reinforcements arrived from Tewksbury that Waller was able to extricate the army from the scene, retreat to Tewksbury and regroup.

Accounts from the victorious Royalist forces suggested that that 80 men from the Parliamentary side were killed in battle and another 80 drowned in the Severn while trying to escape. The number of the dead had swelled to 500 the following week. Two Royalist soldiers were said to have died. The Ripple parish register carried no mention of casualties (Atkin, 1995).

The area of the proposed manege is shown on the 1904 and 1924 OS maps as within a large field to the north of an orchard. While it is likely that a field of this size may have been used for arable, on the Land Utilisation Survey of 1942 it is shown as meadowland and permanent grass.

## 4. Objectives

In accordance with the requirements of The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2014), the aims and scope of the project are to undertake sufficient fieldwork to: - determine the presence or absence of archaeologically significant deposits; identify their location, nature, date and preservation; assess their significance and assess the likely impact of the proposed development.

The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists establishes codes of conduct for archaeological practitioners, this project will be carried out in accordance with the Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation, CIfA 2014, and Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials, CIfA 2014).

In addition, the project was carried out in accordance with Historic England guidelines for metal detecting contained in Our Portable Past: Guidance for Good Practice (HE 2013) and guidance provided by the Portable Antiquities Scheme, 2017.

The aims of the project were as follows:

- To identify, investigate, and record all significant buried archaeological finds encountered
- To provide sufficient information to enable further mitigation strategies to be determined, where appropriate

## 5. Methodology

A Written Scheme of Investigation for the project (Ambrey Archaeology 2021) was prepared and approved by Aidan Smyth, Archaeological Advisor to Malvern Hills District Council.

Prior to commencing fieldwork, a search of the Historic Environment Record (500m radius from the centre of the site) was obtained and a safety method statement for the works was produced.

An independent grid was established across the proposed development area by means of measured survey. Transects 2m wide ran north-west by south-east across the proposed development area and each was identified by a letter (A-T). The grid was tied into the OS national grid.

Metal detecting sweeps were carried out along the transects using a Minelab X-Terra 705 metal detector ensuring an overlap of sweeps along transect lines and identified metal objects were retrieved.

Each individual findspot was marked on a plan. Finds were individually bagged and the bags marked with the site code and the letter of the transect from which they were found.

Once off-site, artefacts were examined and conservation needs and/or further analysis identified.

Any excavations for the purpose of artefact retrieval were immediately reinstated.





*Plate 3: The site during the metal detecting survey*

## 6. Archaeological Results

Eleven metal finds were retrieved from topsoil across the site at depths of 0.10-0.20m (Figure 3).

The finds were examined off-site and are modern iron fragments. Full details can be found in Appendix 1.

No finds of archaeological significance were recovered.



Figure 3: Location of finds recovered during metal detecting survey

## 7. Conclusions

No artefacts of archaeological significance were recovered during the survey.

The potential Iron Age/Romano British settlement may have been focused closer to the River Severn, to the west of the site, where cropmarks have been recorded. Should deposits or features related to an outlier of this settlement survive at the site, it is likely that they would survive at a depth greater than would be disturbed by the excavations for the manege.

No finds associated with the battle of Ripple were recorded at the site. Should artefacts associated with the battle survive at the site they may be at a greater depth than was tested by the metal detecting survey. The site may have had an ancillary part to play in the battle, with the main action taking place more to the south and the east; the nearby field called Deadland Furlong, is known locally as a probable site for the battle (Alex Ross, April 2021, *pers comm*).

Although the field in which the manege is to be constructed has been reseeded as pasture by the current owners, there is evidence that it was used for arable by the previous owners. This could

suggest that the ground has been disturbed sufficiently for evidence of the battle not to have survived *in situ*. Equally, past cultivation including that of ridge and furrow cultivation during the medieval/post-medieval periods may not have been of sufficient depth to disturb Civil War or earlier layers.

Excavations for the manege will not exceed a depth of 300mm and it is not considered that its construction will have an impact on archaeological deposits.

*The methods adopted allow a moderate to high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.*

## 8. Bibliography

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### *Maps*

Basemap - OSM [2021]

Location map – OS Explorer series, crown copyright [2021] (*licence no. 0100031673*)

OS 1<sup>st</sup> edition of Worcestershire 1:2500, 1886 XLVII.16

LiDAR imagery, downloaded from Battlefields Trust (2021)

Land Utilisation Survey of Britain, 1942, sheet 92 - Gloucester and Forest of Dean, scale 1:63360 [https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/maps/sheet/lus\\_stamp/eng\\_lus\\_092](https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/maps/sheet/lus_stamp/eng_lus_092) [Accessed May 2021]

## 9. Acknowledgements

Ambrey Archaeology would like to thank the following for their help with this project: Aidan Smyth, archaeological advisor to Malvern Hills District Council and Alex Feetham (the client).

## 10. Archive

The project archive and metal finds are currently held by Ambrey Archaeology. Subject to the agreement of the landowner, the archive will be deposited with Worcestershire Museum at Hartlebury. The digital archive will be placed with ADS.

## Appendix 1

### AM0421MF; Malthouse Farm Metal Finds

Find no	Transect	Material	Description	Plate
1	A	Iron	Three fragments, probable nails	4
2	B	Iron	Fragment - unidentifiable	4
3	B	Iron	Bolt and washer	4
4	C	Iron	Unidentifiable fragment	4
5	C	Iron	Fragment of spanner	5
6	E	Iron	Fragment of nail	5
7	J	Iron	Fragment, slightly curved, but unidentifiable	5
8	K	Iron	Unidentifiable	5
9	M	Iron	Possible fragment of bolt	5
10	M		VOID	
11	N	Iron	Fragment, possible of bolt	5
12	N	Iron	Hook/nail	5
13	O		VOID	



Plate 4 Metal finds 1-4. 50mm scales





*Plate 5 Metal finds 5 -12. 50mm scales*