

**LAND AT BATTLEFLAT LODGE FARM, BARDON,
HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH BOROUGH, LEICESTERSHIRE**

METAL-DETECTOR SURVEY REPORT

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Report prepared for

Oxalis Planning

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Summary

An archaeological metal-detector survey was carried out on five fields at Battleflat Lodge Farm, in the parish of Stanton-under-Bardon in Leicestershire, in order to inform a planning application for commercial development.

A previous desk-based assessment identified no previously recorded archaeological sites or findspots in or near the application area, but noted that the place-name 'Battle Flat' is said to derive from the semi-legendary Battle of Bardon, more popularly known as Mount Badon, at which an invading Anglo-Saxon army was routed by a Romanised British commander, although there is no evidence for this identification beyond the place-names of Bardon Hill and Battle Flat itself.

No artefacts found during the metal-detector survey could be identified as military in origin or as deriving from the period at which the Battle of Bardon is supposed to have taken place.

The datable finds, all of which are of iron, appear to represent a single assemblage from a post-medieval to modern blacksmith's or farrier's workshop, including specialist blacksmith's tools as well as other tools, horseshoes and items that appear to be unfinished pieces or badly blunted cutting tools in need of sharpening. The finds are considered to be of little archaeological significance, and the further archaeological potential of the survey area appears to be low.

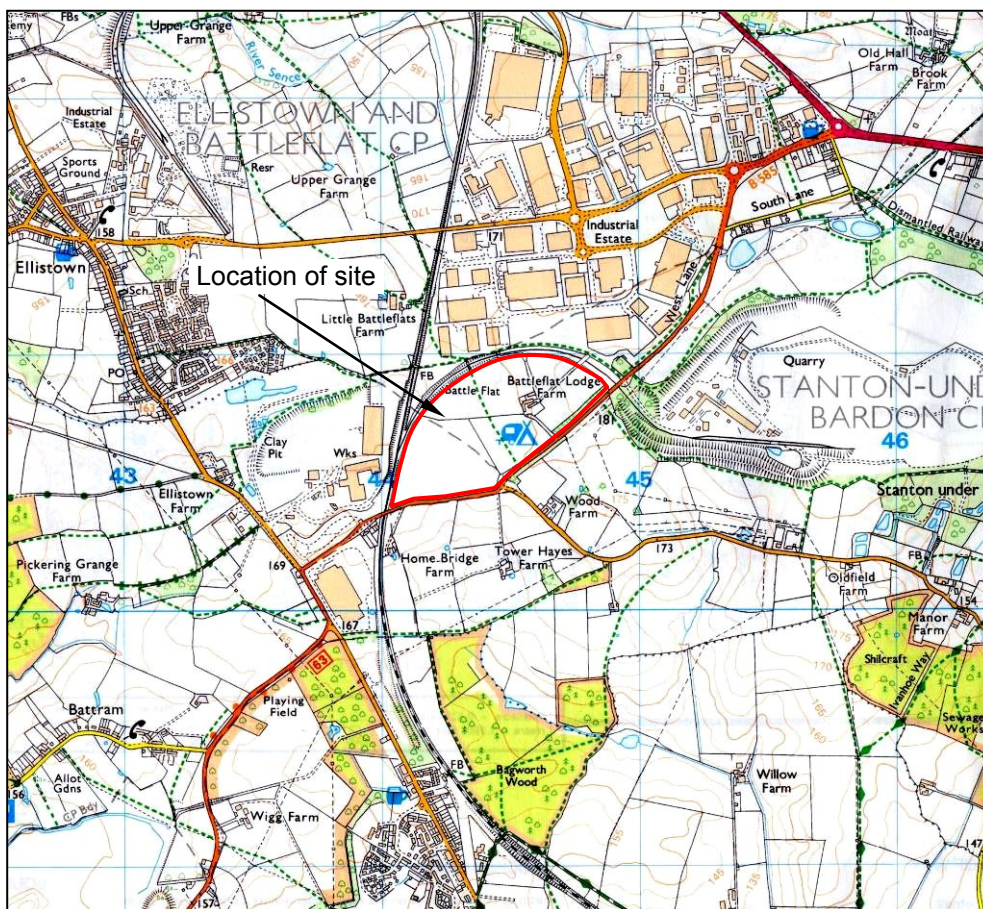


Figure 1: Location plan of the site at scale 1:25,000. The site is outlined in red. OS mapping © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. PCAS licence no. 100049278.

1.0 Introduction

Pre-Construct Archaeological Services Ltd (PCAS) were commissioned by Oxalis Planning to carry out a metal-detector survey to inform a planning application for a proposed commercial development on farmland at Battleflat Lodge Farm, in the parish of Stanton-under-Bardon in Leicestershire.

This survey is subsequent to the compilation of an archaeological desk-based assessment, which concluded that the proposed development site is of low to negligible archaeological potential, and that any archaeological remains within the site boundary are likely to derive from post-medieval agricultural activity (Evans, 2015). As the place-name 'Battle Flat' is locally held to indicate the site of the Dark Age Battle of Bardon, more popularly known as Mount Badon, at which an invading Anglo-Saxon army was routed by a Romanised British commander: a combined programme of fieldwalking and metal-detecting was undertaken in order to retrieve any potential evidence for such an event.

2.0 Site Location and Description (figs. 1 & 2)

Battleflat Lodge Farm is situated at the western end of the civil parish of Stanton-under-Bardon in the Hinckley and Bosworth district of Leicestershire, approximately 0.75km to the east of Ellistown village and 3km south-east of the town of Coalville, at the central National Grid Reference of SK 44414 10756.

The site has a total area of some 29 hectares and is broadly fan-shaped. It is bordered to the south and east by Victoria Road (the B585), which is separated from the site by a high hedge; to the north, the site is bordered by the curving embankment of the former New Cliffe Hill Mineral Railway, which connects a large mineral extraction site to the east of Battleflat Lodge Farm to the main Leicester to Swannington railway line, which borders the western edge of the site. The Interlink Industrial Estate begins directly to the north of the railway embankment; there are further industrial buildings to the west of the site, and open agricultural land to the south.

The farmstead of Battleflat Lodge Farm is sited near the centre of the site and consists of a mixture of original red brick barns and modern barns, to the south of which a new bungalow has been constructed following the demolition of the original Battleflat Lodge due to subsidence (Evans, 2015). The survey area consisted of six fields, referred to by letter codes for the purposes of the surveys (fig. 2). Field D was under pasture at the time of the surveys; metal-detecting was possible in the cropped turf, but this field was excluded from the accompanying fieldwalking survey. The other five fields had been ploughed, harrowed and drilled earlier in the year and were under seedling arable crops, allowing easy access to the ground surface.

3.0 Topography and Geology

The site lies at an approximate Ordnance Datum height of 175m above sea level, on relatively level ground at the crest of a hill, with undulating land falling away on all sides. The site visit observed that the site itself was generally flat, with slight undulations on the western side (Evans, 2015).

The British Geological Survey records the drift geology across the proposed development site as Oadby Member diamicton: a mixture of till, sand and gravel deposited by glaciation and glacial meltwaters. The underlying solid geology is Edwalton Member mudstone (bgs.ac.uk). Soils across the site chiefly consist of slowly permeable, seasonally wet, slightly acidic but base-rich loamy and clayey soils (Evans, 2015).

4.0 Planning Background

A planning application for the development of employment buildings with associated highways and drainage infrastructure, as well as landscaping and other works on site, is in preparation. The findings of the archaeological metal-detector survey, with the results of the associated fieldwalking survey, will be presented in support of the application.

5.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

A detailed archaeological and historical background has already been compiled for this project in the form of a desk-based assessment prepared by PCAS (Evans, 2015); its findings are very briefly summarised here.

No prehistoric or Roman remains have been recorded either on or within 1km of the proposed development site.

The place-name 'Battle Flat' is recorded only in post-medieval documentary and cartographic sources, but is locally held to indicate the site of the Dark Age Battle of Bardon, more popularly known as Mount Badon, at which an invading Anglo-Saxon army was routed by a British commander. However, this battle is at best semi-legendary, since the British commander is supposed to have been King Arthur, and a number of other sites in England and Wales also claim the honour of being its venue. No other sites or monuments of this date are recorded within 1km of the site.

The village of Stanton-under-Bardon is documented in Domesday Book as a manor held by Geoffrey de la Guerche of the king, with a population of 18 households cultivating 3 carucates (roughly 360 acres) of arable land and managing a substantial area of woodland (Williams and Martin, 2003, p.643), but the site lies outside both the settlement and its agricultural hinterland, in an area of common land between large medieval deer parks. No evidence of medieval earthworks was seen during the research for the DBA, and the field system is believed to date to the enclosure period.

The area known as Battle Flat was wooded at the beginning of the 18th century: Newberry Wood and Coxe's Wood were cut down and the land brought into cultivation in 1703.

The surrounding landscape has been substantially altered by post-medieval and modern industry. Directly to the west of Battleflat Lodge Farm are the industrial buildings and substantial brick-pits of the works marked on late 19th-century mapping as the Ellistown Collieries, Brick Pipe and Fireclay Works; the colliery closed in 1989, but the brickworks is still in operation. To the east are the Old Cliffe Hill Quarry, whose mineral railway, now disused, was built in 1896 and forms the northern boundary of the site, and the New Cliffe Hill Quarry, immediately adjacent to the site, which was worked between 1983 and 2006 and is now used only for processing stone from the older quarry.

The DBA concluded that the proposed development site is of low to negligible archaeological potential, and that if there are any archaeological remains within the site boundary, these are likely to derive from post-medieval agricultural activity (Evans, 2015).

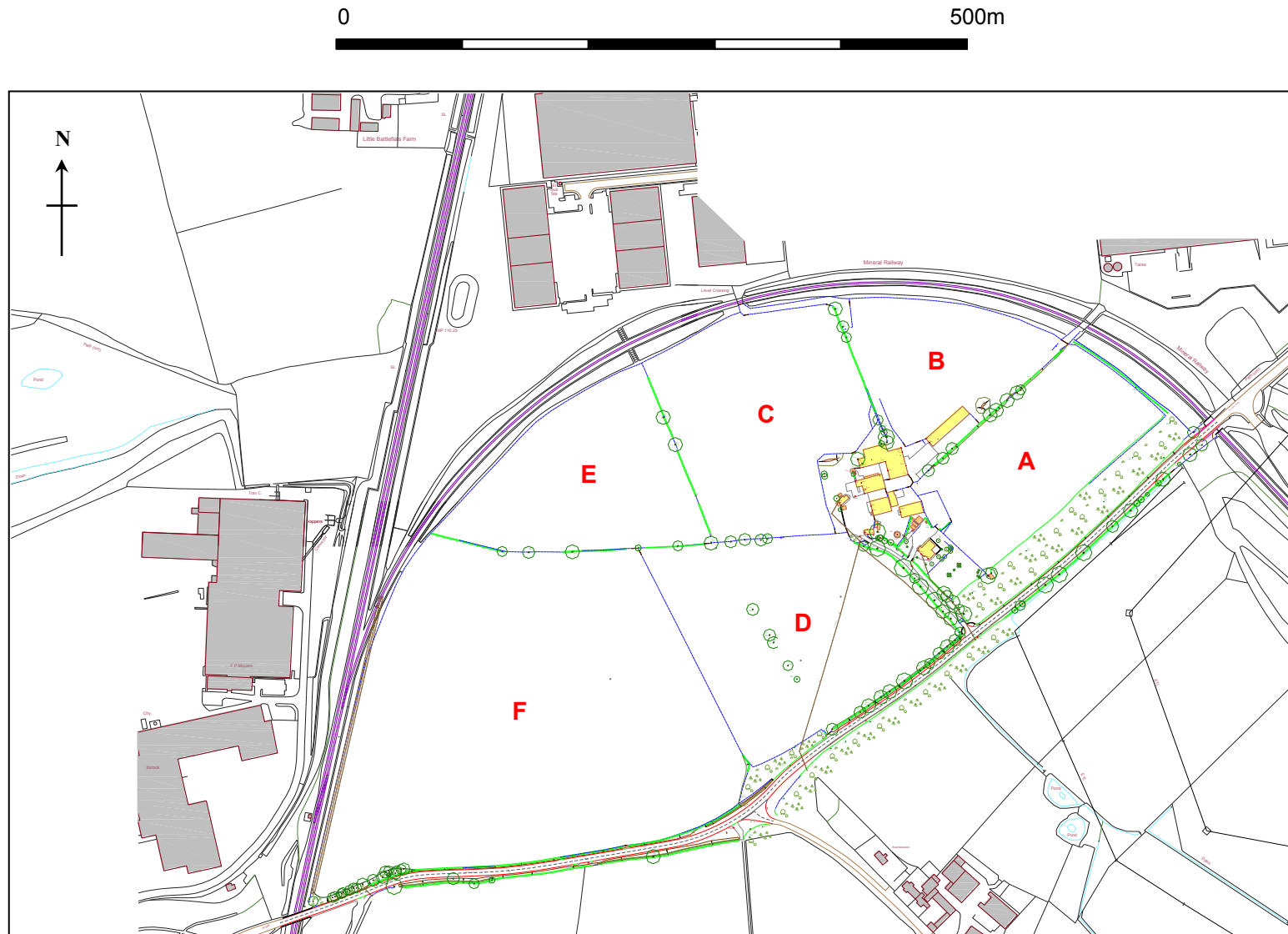


Figure 2: As-existing plan of the proposed development site at scale 1:5000, showing the field divisions with the letter codes used during both surveys. Plan supplied by client.

6.0 Methodology

A baseline was set out along one side of each field, and a series of transects running at right angles to the baseline were laid out and marked with canes. The standard transects were 2m wide to give full coverage of the fields, but in Fields D and F, 3m wide transects were used, due to the large size of Field F and the turf cover in Field D. All finds appearing to be earlier than the mid-20th century were collected; wherever there was doubt about an artefact's age, it was also collected. All finds were bagged and labelled, and their locations were recorded using a Leica GNSS full RTK GPS, in order to be plotted on a scale plan (fig. 3).

The metal-detector used was a Fisher M-scope 1236-X2. The survey was carried out using a high sensitivity setting for maximum depth, and a relatively low discrimination to pick up a wide range of objects.

The survey was undertaken between the 10th and the 19th of October 2015, by Richard Mandeville, Leigh Brocklehurst, Mike Garrett and Simon Savage. Weather conditions were generally favourable, with good light and relatively dry ground.

All finds were sent to Gary Taylor of Archaeological Project Services for preliminary assessment (Appendix 2).

7.0 Results (fig. 3)

46 metal artefacts were retrieved during the survey: all were of iron. The density of finds broadly increased towards the north of the surveyed area, with a particular concentration on the east side of Field E and the west side of Field C. Field A produced finds only along its south-eastern edge, while finds were more thinly scattered across Field F. Field D, which was pasture land, produced only one find.

7.1 Prehistoric

No prehistoric artefacts were retrieved during the survey.

7.2 Roman

No Roman artefacts were retrieved during the survey.

7.3 Anglo-Saxon and Early Medieval

No Anglo-Saxon or early medieval artefacts were retrieved during the survey.

7.4 Medieval

Six of the artefacts retrieved during the survey may have been medieval. A large bolt, probably from a cart, and a possible timber dog or staple were found in Field B (finds 10010-11), a further large bolt and a possible chisel or punch in Field C (finds 10015 and 10022), a possible sickle blade in Field E (find 10026) and a possible small chisel in Field F (find 10036). However, all these artefacts may also have been post-medieval, and it seems most likely that they are associated with the items identified as being more recent, and form part of the post-medieval to early modern smithy assemblage, particularly since the sickle blade appears to be unfinished (Appendix 2).

7.5 Post-Medieval and Modern

The majority of the finds retrieved during the survey could be identified as post-medieval or modern. They included nine horseshoes, some of a suitable size for heavy draught horses, from Fields A, E and F. Among the tools retrieved were two specifically identifiable as blacksmith's tools: an anvil devil from Field E and a possible hardie chisel or chisel-edged hammer from Field C. Four other items from Fields C and F were identified as chisels or possible chisels, with one possible graver from Field E. One object from Field F and the single item retrieved from Field D appeared to be possible chopping tools, although they had no distinct cutting blades, indicating that they were either unfinished or too blunt for continued use. Other finds included a bolt that may have been a cart fitting and a possible harrow tine, both from Field B, nails, and a number of fragments of sheet iron and iron bars (Appendix 2).

The finds assemblage was considered to be of no archaeological merit, and was discarded after specialist assessment.

8.0 Discussion and Conclusions

No artefacts found during the metal-detector survey could be identified as military in origin or as deriving from the period at which the Battle of Bardon is supposed to have taken place.

The majority of the datable finds were post-medieval to modern, with some potentially being medieval to post-medieval; however, the nature of the six potentially earlier finds corresponds so well to the post-medieval majority that it seems very likely that they form one contemporary post-medieval assemblage. The combination of blacksmith's tools, other tools, horseshoes and items that appear to be unfinished pieces or badly blunted cutting tools in need of sharpening indicate debris from a blacksmith's or farrier's workshop (Appendix 2); occasional horseshoes are to be expected in fields tilled by horse-drawn equipment or through which bridle paths pass, but the presence of nine in an assemblage of forty-six finds suggests that these are something over and above casual losses. It is probably significant in this context that the fieldwalking survey carried out concurrently with the metal-detector survey retrieved only three sherds of pottery from the whole of the surveyed area, indicating that little domestic refuse disposal took place here.

In the light of the specialist assessment of the finds, historical sources were consulted in an attempt to find the possible origin of the assemblage. A single documentary reference was identified in the S. Barker and Co. county gazetteer and directory of 1875, which lists the village of Stanton under Bardon as possessing both a blacksmith, James Roughton, and a wheelwright, William Varnham (S. Barker & Co., 1875, p.247). No smithy is marked on the 25" to the mile 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1883-84, either in the vicinity of the site or in the village, and the Kelly's Directory of 1895 does not list a blacksmith in Stanton under Bardon, so it seems likely that the 1875 reference marks the end of the smithy's working lifespan, possibly due to the increasing use of steam power in both agriculture and transport.

9.0 Effectiveness of Methodology

The fieldwalking survey, combined with the metal-detector survey and the findings of the desk-based assessment, was fully effective in demonstrating the low archaeological potential of the application area without the need for intrusive methods of archaeological investigation.

10.0 Acknowledgements

PCAS Ltd would like to thank Oxalis Planning for this commission.

11.0 Site Archive

The documentary archive for this project will be deposited with the Leicester Museums Archaeology Collections, jointly with that of a fieldwalking survey running concurrently with this project (site code BALF 15). Archive deposition is anticipated within 12 months of the completion of the project; following deposition, both archives will be available for consultation under the county archive accession number X.A106.2015.

12.0 References

British Geological Survey (BGS) consulted online 05-10-2015 at
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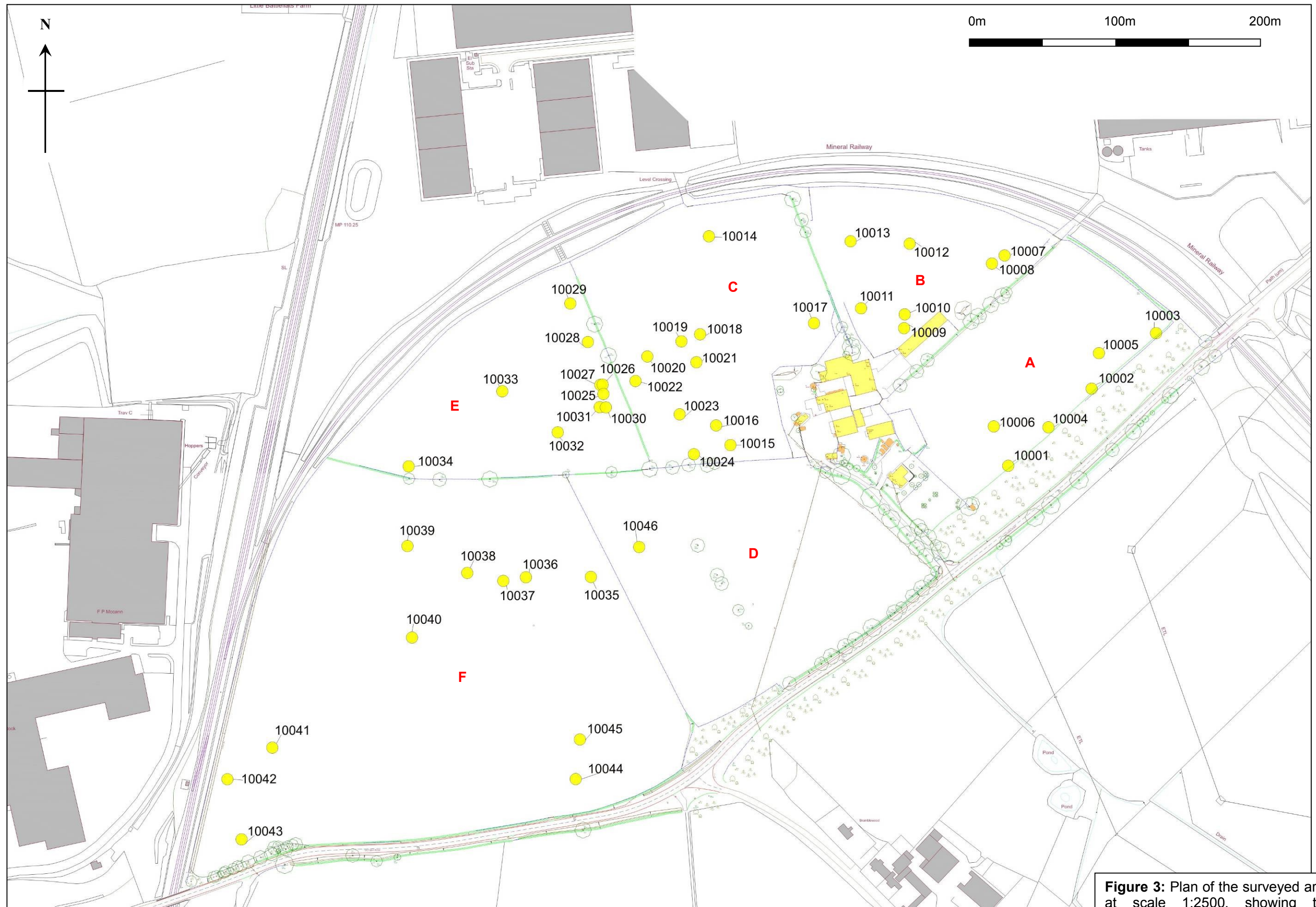


Figure 3: Plan of the surveyed area at scale 1:2500, showing the locations of all metal-detector finds.

Appendix 1: Colour Plates



Plate 1: General shot of the W side of the survey area, looking W from the SE corner of Field C across Fields D (under grass) and E.



Plate 2: Field D, which was pasture land at the time of the survey, and could therefore be metal-detected but not fieldwalked, looking E from near its W edge.



Plate 3: Field E, from which almost half the metal-detecting finds were retrieved, looking E from its W corner. Battleflats Lodge Farm is in the distance at the right-hand side of the picture.



Plate 4: Field F, from which almost half the metal-detecting finds were retrieved, looking E from the W edge of the field near the railway line.

Appendix 2: The Metal-Detecting Finds

by Gary Taylor

Introduction

A fairly large quantity of metal finds, 46 items weighing a total of 6819g, and all of them of iron, were recovered.

Condition

The metal finds are in moderate-good condition though all are corroded.

Results

Table 1, Finds Catalogue

Cxt	Material	Description	NoF	W (g)	Date
Field A, 10001	Iron	Horseshoe with toeclip; large shoe	1	695	19 th -early 20 th century
Field A, 10002	Iron	Horseshoe fragment with calkin	1	84	Post-medieval
Field A, 10003	Iron	Horseshoe with toeclip; large shoe	1	801	19 th -early 20 th century
Field A, 10004	Iron	Circular-sectioned iron bar	1	92	Post-medieval
Field A, 10005	Iron	Probable drain pipe; cast curved sheet	1	69	Late post-medieval
Field A, 10006	Iron	Horseshoe with toeclip	1	667	19 th -early 20 th century
Field B, 10007	Iron	Sheet, slightly curved, unidentified	1	45	
Field B, 10008	Iron	Nail, 5 inch	1	17	19 th -20 th century
Area B, 10009	Iron	Possible harrow tine	1	33	Late post-medieval
Field B, 10010	Iron	Large bolt, probably from cart	1	121	Medieval or later
Field B, 10011	Iron	Possible timber dog/staple	1	9	Medieval or later
Field B, 10012	Iron	Rectangular sheet with large perforation; probable strap hinge fragment, or possible machinery part	1	34	Late post-medieval
Field B, 10013	Iron	Sheet, slightly curved, unidentified	1	29	
Field C, 10014	Iron	Possible blacksmith's hammer, or hardie chisel	1	214	Post-medieval
Field C, 10015	Iron	Large bolt, probably from cart	1	74	Medieval or later
Field C, 10016	Iron	Large bolt with washer and nut attached, probably cart fitting	1	85	Post-medieval
Field C, 10017	Iron	Possible chisel	1	32	
Field C, 10018	Iron	Circular-sectioned rod, possible tine	1	26	Late post-medieval
Field C, 10019	Iron	Possible nail; uncertain	1	19	

Cxt	Material	Description	NoF	W (g)	Date
Field C, 10020	Iron	Flat sheet, possibly cast; unidentified	1	27	Post-medieval?
Field C, 10021	Iron	Possible drain pipe; cast curved sheet coated in bitumen-like material	1	29	Late post-medieval
Field C, 10022	Iron	Possible chisel or punch	1	23	Medieval or later
Field C, 10023	Iron	Curved sheet, ?cast; possible cauldron fragment	1	72	Post-medieval
Field C, 10024	Iron	Flat sheet, probably cast	1	60	Post-medieval
Field E, 10025	Iron	Anvil devil; triangular-sectioned bar	1	51	Post-medieval
Field E, 10026	Iron	Possible sickle, perhaps unfinished. Curved strip, mostly c. 30mm wide, plano-convex section. Narrows at one end to an apparently irregular tang. No evidence of having a sharpened inner edge	1	182	Medieval or later
Field E, 10027	Iron	Flat sheet, possibly cast; appears to be part of a larger rectangular sheet	1	35	Post-medieval
Area E, 10028	Iron	Rectangular-sectioned bar, irregular and narrowing to one end; unidentified	1	25	
Field E, 10029	Iron	Bar, rectangular section, variable thickness; unidentified	1	66	
Field E, 10030	Iron	Flat sheet, possibly cast; unidentified	1	15	Post-medieval?
Field E, 10031	Iron	Possible graver; flattened triangular strip, tapering to a point, 10cm long, 15mm max width	1	20	Post-medieval?
Field E, 10032	Iron	Flat, very gently curved sheet, probably cast	1	74	Post-medieval?
Field E, 10033	Iron	D-shaped sheet, unidentified	1	30	
Field E, 10034	Iron	Horseshoe with toeclip and large turned-up calkins	1	1035	19 th century
Field F, 10035	Iron	Fragment of thick circular disk or ring, probably cast; unidentified	1	148	Late post-medieval
Field F, 10036	Iron	Possible small chisel; rectangular-sectioned bar tapering to chisel point	1	26	Medieval or later
Field F, 10037	Iron	Possible cauldron handle	1	83	Late post-medieval
Field F, 10038	Iron	Horseshoe, possibly with toeclip	1	376	19 th century
Field F, 10039	Iron	Horseshoe	1	199	19 th century
Field F, 10040	Iron	Chisel	1	164	Post-medieval
Field F, 10041	Iron	Horseshoe	1	130	19 th century
Field F, 10042	Iron	Rectangular strip, 103mm long, maximum 31mm wide; 6mm thick along one edge, 2mm thick on other; possible chopping tool?	1	54	Post-medieval?
Field F, 10043	Iron	Horseshoe with toeclip	1	505	19 th century
Field F, 10044	Iron	Unidentified. Rectangular-sectioned bar tapering to one end. From middle toward other end becomes flattened and curved, tapering to a point	1	60	Post-medieval
Field F, 10045	Iron	Irregular curved sheet, possibly cast	1	69	Post-medieval?

Cxt	Material	Description	NoF	W (g)	Date
Field D, 10046	Iron	Rectangular strip, 166mm long, maximum 30mm wide; 10mm thick along one edge, 5mm thick on other; possible chopping tool?	1	115	Post-medieval?
Totals			46	6819	

Provenance

The finds were recovered during a metal detecting survey.

Range

The finds are exclusively of iron.

Numerous horseshoes were found. These all appear to be post-medieval or later, with a number of 19th or even early 20th century examples recovered. Several have toeclips, a feature introduced in the mid 19th century (Hume 1991, 238-9). Some of the shoes are large and were probably for heavy horses, such as shires. Others are distinctly smaller, perhaps for much lighter horses or ponies.

A possible blacksmith's hammer, with a chisel edge, or hardie chisel was retrieved (10014). Hardie chisels fitted into the hardie hole of an anvil and were used with the chisel blade pointing upwards, with metal being worked being hammered down on to the cutting edge of the chisel.

An anvil devil was also recovered (10025). Such tools were used by farriers and blacksmiths for cutting or making V notches. Because of its triangular section it could be placed and used on any flat surface.

There is a possible cauldron fragment (10024). Cast iron cauldrons began to replace copper alloy ones, which had been commonplace since the medieval period, in the early 18th century. There are other pieces of cast iron and it is virtually certain that all these are of post-medieval date.

A possible sickle (10026) was recovered. However, it has an untidy tang and the inner, cutting, edge is unsharpened, suggesting it is unfinished. Two other possible chopping tools (10044 and 10046), both on rectangular strips, were also collected. Although narrowing towards one edge these also lack a distinct cutting blade and may have been severely blunt and awaiting re-sharpening, or were unfinished.

Cumulatively, there are numerous pieces that indicate the activities of a blacksmith or farrier.

Potential

The metal finds are of limited-moderate potential. Where datable, most of the items are post-medieval to early modern. It is likely that most, if not all, of the assemblage is debris from a blacksmith of this period. No further work is required on the assemblage.

ABBREVIATIONS

NoF Number of Fragments

W (g) Weight (grams)

REFERENCES

Hume, I N, 1991 *A Guide to the Artifacts of Colonial America* (Vintage Books)

Appendix 3: OASIS Summary