

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

FIELDWALKING REPORT

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Report prepared for

Oxalis Planning

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Summary

An archaeological fieldwalking 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 fieldwalking survey were military in origin, nor could any be definitely identified as deriving from the period at which the Battle of Bardon is supposed to have taken place.

The fieldwalking retrieved a total of three sherds of pottery, two of which were identified as post-medieval, while the third could have been Roman or post-Roman. The findings of the fieldwalking survey, in conjunction with those of the previous desk-based assessment and the associated metal-detector survey, suggest that the surveyed land is not likely to have been occupied or cultivated until the 18th century or later.

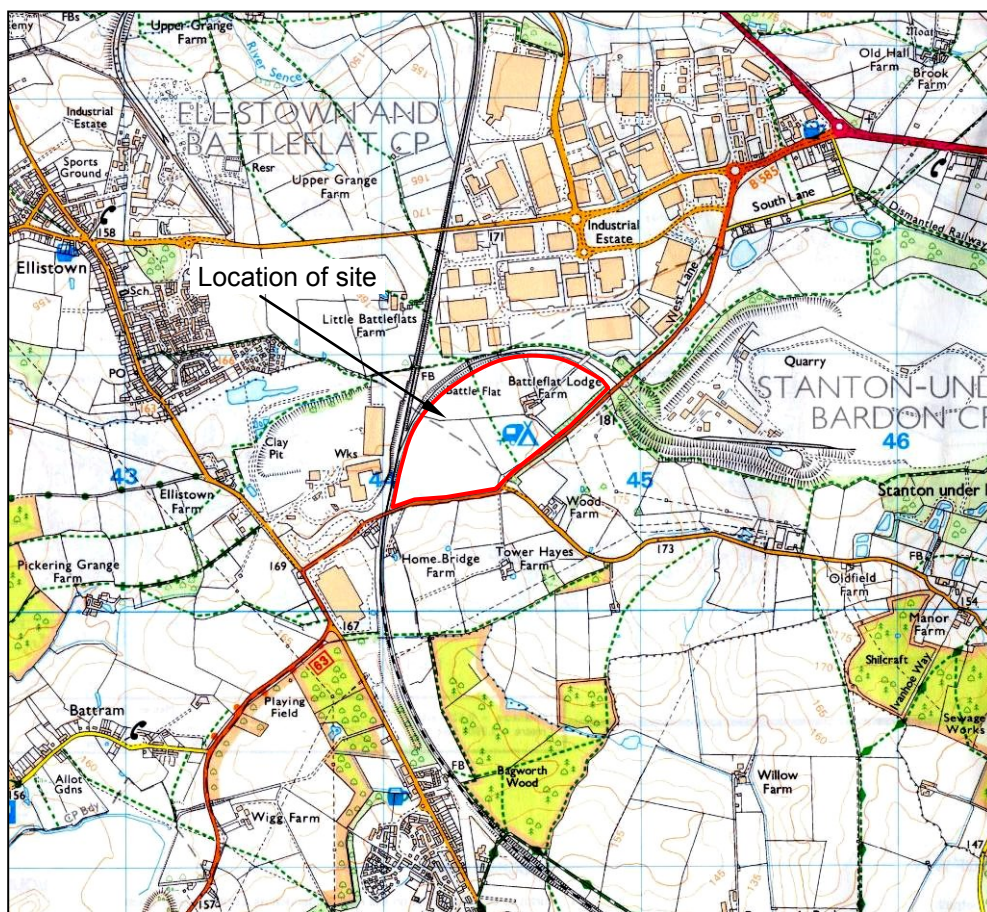


Figure 1: Location plan of the site at scale 1:25,000. The site is outlined in red. OS mapping © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. PCAS licence no. 100049278.

1.0 Introduction

Pre-Construct Archaeological Services Ltd (PCAS) were commissioned by Oxalis Planning to carry out a fieldwalking 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 metal-detecting and fieldwalking 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, and could not be fieldwalked, although it was included in the metal-detector survey. Fieldwalking conditions were particularly favourable in the other five fields, as they had been ploughed, harrowed and drilled earlier in the year, allowing some weathering of the ground surface, and were under seedling arable crops that did not interfere with visibility.

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 fieldwalking, with the associated metal-detector 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 Romanised 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).

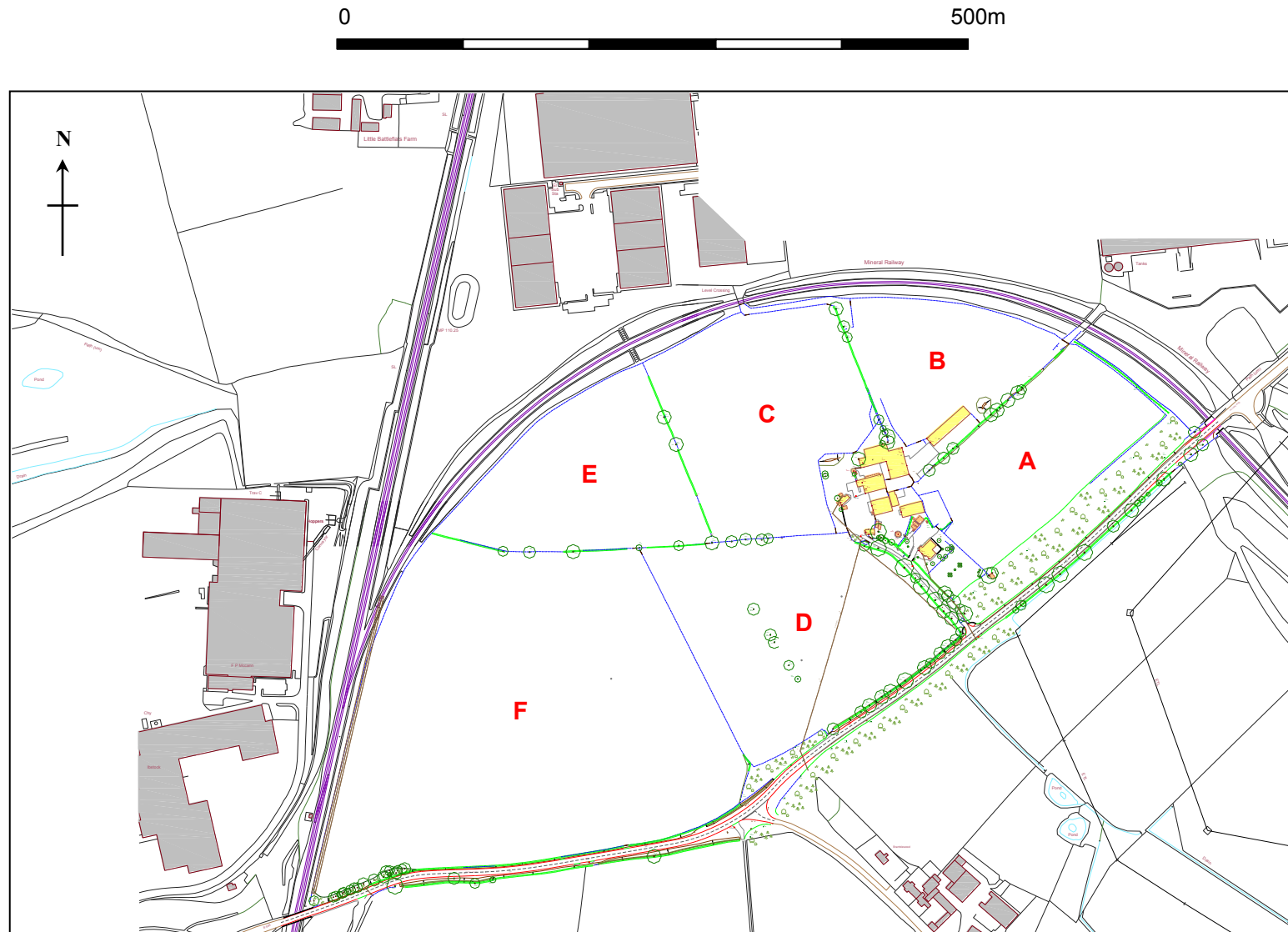


Figure 2: As-existing plan of the proposed development site at scale 1:5000, showing the field divisions with the letter codes used during both surveys. Plan supplied by client.

6.0 Methodology

A baseline was set out along one side of each field in turn, and a series of transects running at right angles to the baseline and spaced 10m apart were marked out with canes. Each transect was walked, the ground being scanned visually about one metre on each side of the marked line. 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 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.

The fieldwalking finds were washed and marked at the premises of PCAS and were then submitted to Jane Young for preliminary assessment.

7.0 Results (fig. 3)

The only one of the six fields surveyed to produce finds was Field F. This was the largest of the fields, bordered by the railway to the west and the B585 to the south; it sloped slightly from west to east (plate 3). Three sherds of pottery were retrieved, all of which were found near the edges of the field.

7.1 Prehistoric

No prehistoric artefacts were retrieved during the survey.

7.2 Roman and Post-Roman

Find 1002, two fragments of a very heavily abraded sherd of pottery which had lost its entire outer surface and retained only its unglazed inner surface, retrieved from the west side of Field F, was of either Roman or post-Roman date, but its condition made more accurate identification impossible.

7.3 Post-Medieval and Modern

The two remaining finds were both of post-medieval to modern date. Find 1001, a very heavily abraded sherd of pottery retaining only a scrap of its original dark glaze, which was found near the north edge of Field F, was dated to the mid-17th to 18th century, while the yellow-glazed sherd Find 1004, found at the south side of Field F, was dated to the 19th to 20th century.

8.0 Discussion and Conclusions

No artefacts found during the fieldwalking survey were military in origin, nor could any be definitely identified as deriving from the period at which the Battle of Bardon is supposed to have taken place.

The distribution of fieldwalking finds across the surveyed area was unusually sparse even for land that was not brought into cultivation until the enclosures of the late post-medieval period: scatters of medieval and post-medieval pottery are normally found in the ploughsoil of cultivated land, representing the manuring of fields by the spreading of material from middens on to which household refuse was thrown. Such manuring scatters are not typical of

Roman agricultural activity, possibly suggesting that Find 1002 is most likely to have been contemporary with the other ceramic finds from Field F, and to represent post-medieval cultivation of the field.

The findings of the fieldwalking survey, in conjunction with those of the previous desk-based assessment and the associated metal-detector survey, suggest that the surveyed land is not likely to have been occupied or cultivated until the 18th century or later. The more substantial findings of the metal-detector survey indicated the possible presence of a post-medieval to modern blacksmith's or farrier's workshop on or near the site (Taylor, 2015), but nothing in the results of the fieldwalking survey could support this interpretation.

The locations of the finds near the edges of the field suggest that they had been transported by ploughing, as does the heavily abraded condition of the material.

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 site archive for this project will be deposited with the Leicester Museums Archaeology Collections, jointly with that of a metal-detector survey running concurrently with this project (site code BALD 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
<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html>

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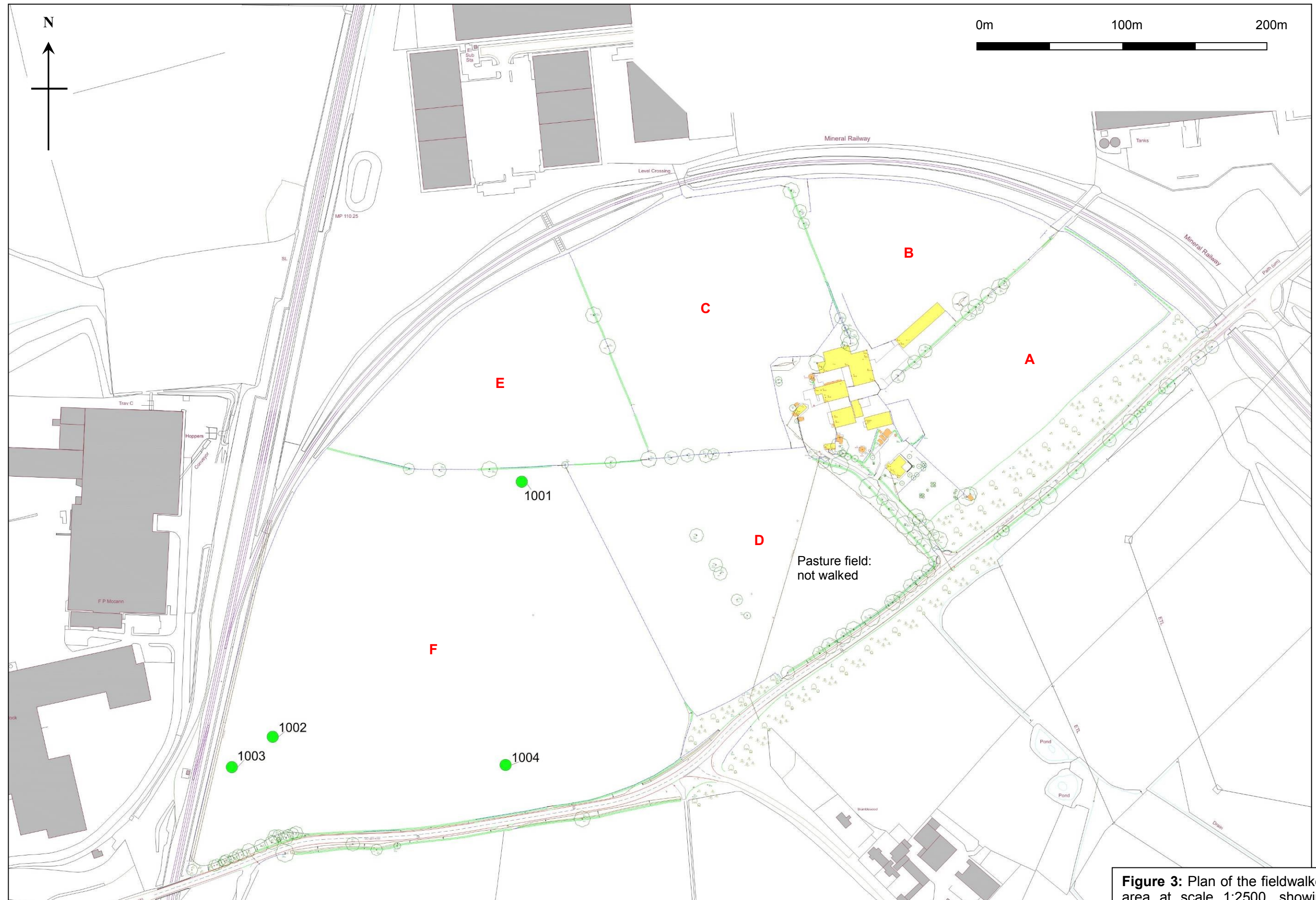


Figure 3: Plan of the fieldwalked area at scale 1:2500, showing the locations of all finds.

Appendix 1: Colour Plates



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



Plate 2: General shot of the E side of the fieldwalked area, looking E from the W corner of Field E; Battleflats Lodge Farm is in the distance at the right-hand side of the picture.



Plate 3: Field F, from which all the fieldwalking finds were retrieved, looking E from the W edge of the field near the railway line.

Appendix 2: The Fieldwalking Finds

by J. Young

Introduction

In total, four sherds of pottery were submitted for examination. Two of the vessels were of recognisable post-Roman type and two very abraded sherds could be of Roman or post-Roman date.

The assemblage was quantified by three measures: number of sherds, weight and vessel count within each context. Reference has been made to the Leicestershire Pottery Type Series held at Leicester University (see Davies and Sawday 1999). The ceramic data was entered on an Access database using Lincolnshire (see Young et al.) fabric codenames with a concordance with Leicestershire codenames (see Table 1). Recording of the assemblage was in accordance with the guidelines laid out in Slowikowski, et al. (2001).

Condition

The material is in a variable condition with most fragments being in a very abraded but stable condition.

Overall Chronology and Source

A range of two identifiable pottery types and two sherds from a vessel of unknown type were identified; the type and general date range for these fabrics are shown in Table 1. The identifiable material ranges in date from the post-medieval to early modern period and was recovered from three find spots in Field F.

Table 1: Ceramic codenames and date ranges with total quantities by sherd count

Lincolnshire codename	Leicestershire codename	Full name	Earliest date	Latest date	Total sherds	Total vessels
MLBSL	EA2	Midlands Light-bodied Slipware	1680	1800	1	1
NCBW	EA	19th century Buff ware	1800	2000	1	1
MISC	OX/MISC	Roman or post-Roman	Roman	1800	2	1

The Pottery

All of the pottery was recovered from Field F. Find spot 1002 produced two very abraded flakes from a single closed vessel in a fine pale orange fabric containing common powdery white clay lumps. The very abraded sherds do not appear to be consistent with known Roman or post-Roman types and therefore could be of Roman or post-Roman medieval to post-medieval date. A very abraded basal sherd from a large bowl in Midlands Light-bodied Slipware was recovered from find spot 1001. This vessel is of late 17th to 18th century date. The latest sherd to be recovered from the site is the base of a 19th century Buff ware vessel of 19th to 20th century date.

Summary and Recommendations

The identifiable ceramic material recovered from this site suggests that there had been post-medieval to early modern activity in the local area. The unidentifiable sherds may be from an earlier Roman or post-Roman vessel. The condition of the material suggests heavy plough damage.

The assemblage is in a stable condition and should be kept for future study.

References

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Appendix 3: OASIS Summary