

**LAND TO SOUTH-EAST OF FORMER A46, SYERSTON,  
NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL METAL-DETECTOR SURVEY**

NGR: SK 74399 48041  
Planning ref.: 15/00912/FULM  
PCAS Job No.: 1582  
Site code: SYND 15  
Archive acc. no.: NEKMS: 2015.38

Report prepared for

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by

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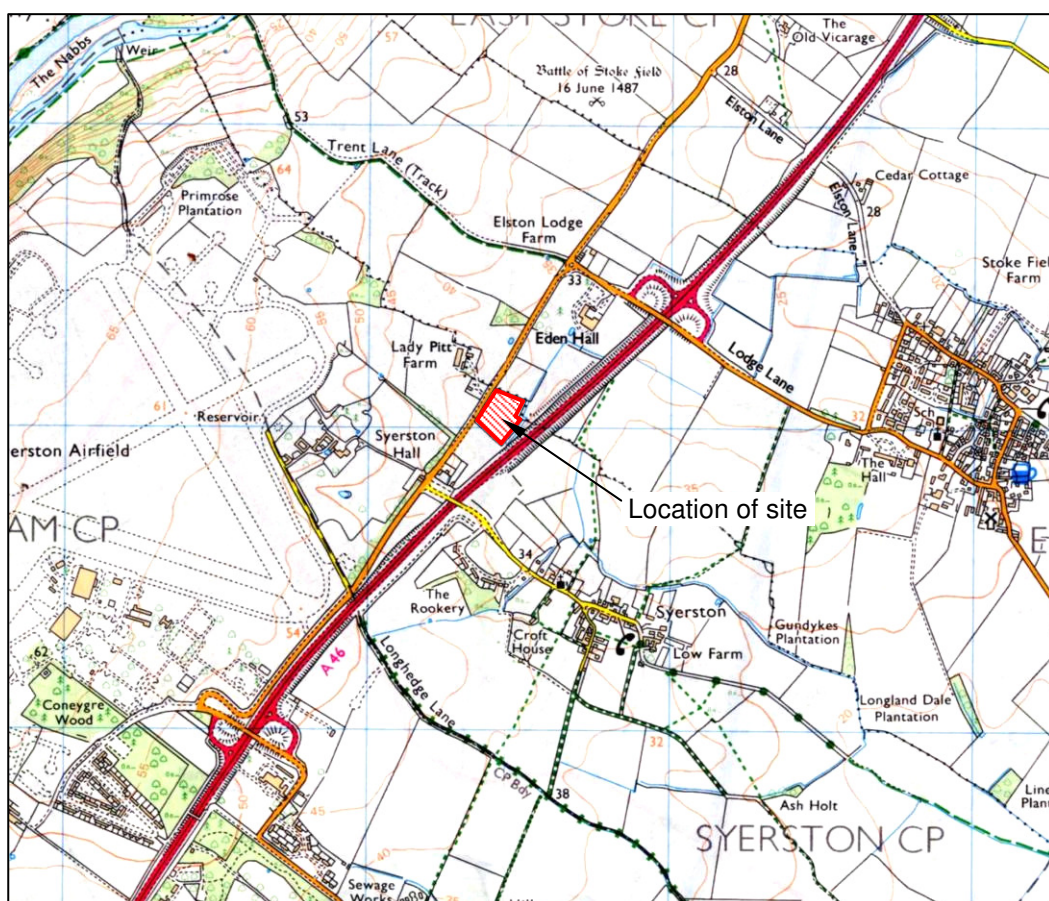
**Pl. 4:** Site setting view, looking NNE along the former course of the A46

## Summary

A scheme of archaeological monitoring and recording was carried out during initial development groundworks associated with the proposed construction of two new agricultural buildings on land on the south-east side of the former course of the A46, near the village of Syerston in the Newark and Sherwood district of Nottinghamshire.

The site is directly adjacent to the registered battlefield of Stoke Field, the last battle of the Wars of the Roses, and to the route of the Fosse Way, a major Roman road whose north end connected the Roman settlements of Lincoln and Leicester.

A total of 34 finds, all of iron, were retrieved by the metal-detector survey. None of the finds could plausibly be assigned a Roman or early medieval date; none of the very small number of medieval or potentially medieval finds had any indication of a military function from which an association with Stoke Field might have been deduced



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

## **1.0 Introduction**

Pre-Construct Archaeological Services Ltd. (PCAS) was commissioned by J. H. Walter LLP to carry out a scheme of archaeological evaluation in advance of a proposed development on a plot of land on the south-east side of the former course of the A46, near the village of Syerston in Nottinghamshire. The site is directly adjacent to the registered battlefield of Stoke Field and the route of the Fosse Way, a major Roman road. The scheme of evaluation was initially to consist of a metal-detector survey combined with a geophysical survey, to be carried out by Pre-Construct Geophysics at the same time.

The objective of the metal-detector survey is to gather evidence to establish the distribution and, if possible, the nature of archaeological remains across the proposed development site, with particular reference to possible artefact scatters from the Battle of Stoke Field, supplementing information gained by the geophysical survey. The results of the scheme of evaluation will be used to inform a planning application currently under consideration, allowing for further archaeological mitigation if required.

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

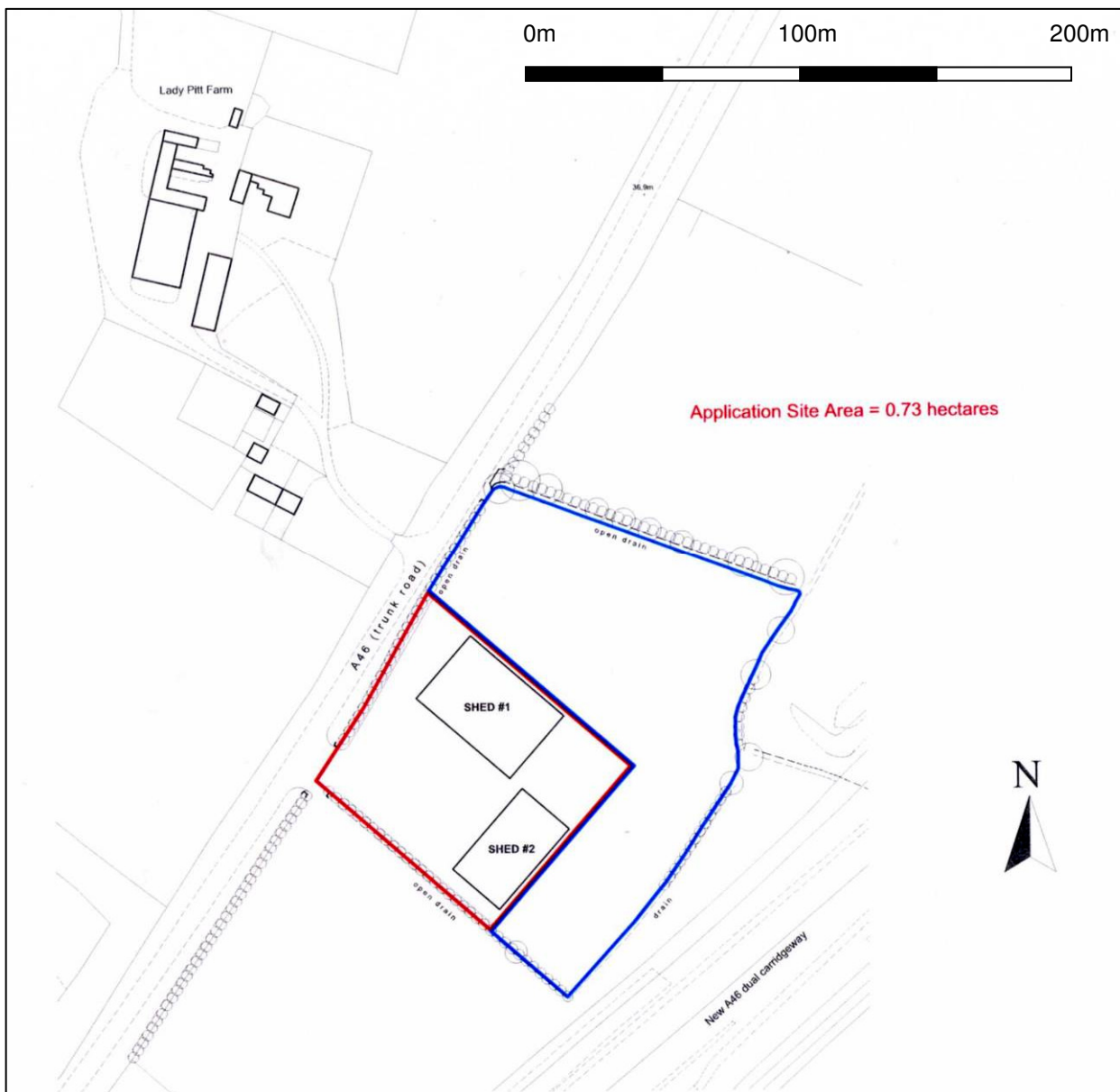
The village of Syerston lies within the Newark and Sherwood district of the county of Nottinghamshire, approximately 9km to the north-north-east of the town of Bingham and 2km to the south-east of the River Trent. It is sited on the south-east side of the A46, whose former course broadly follows the line of the Fosse Way, a major Roman road, although the current course of the A46 now deviates from this line in several places; one such deviation occurs near Syerston, with the older course of the road continuing as the local road to the village of East Stoke while the new road layout takes a more easterly course to bypass it.

The proposed development site lies between the old and new roads at the central National Grid Reference of SK 74399 48041, with the modern course of the A46 forming its south-eastern boundary, the old Fosse Way as its north-western boundary, and the Syerston parish boundary on the north-east side. The site consists of a single pasture field (formerly under arable cultivation) with an area of 0.73 hectares, and is bounded on all sides by hedges with open drains.

## **3.0 Topography and Geology**

Syerston is situated on a broad ridge between the valleys of the Rivers Trent and Devon; the Fosse Way runs along this ridge. The general topography of the area is of a gentle slope to the south-east from the crest of the ridge, on the far side of the Fosse Way (occupied by the airfield of RAF Syerston). The site appears generally level, with the embankment of the old road lying outside its boundary, although the presence of standing water at the south-east side of the field indicated that the site sloped imperceptibly downwards in this direction. It is at an approximate Ordnance Datum height of 37m above sea level.

No drift geology is recorded in the vicinity of Syerston. The exposed solid geology consists of the Edwalton Formation of the Mercia Mudstone Group: reddish-brown or greenish-grey mudstone incorporating widespread beds of grey-green dolomitic siltstone and sandstone (BGS, 1996).



**Figure 2:** As-proposed plan of the site at scale 1:2500.  
Plan supplied by client.

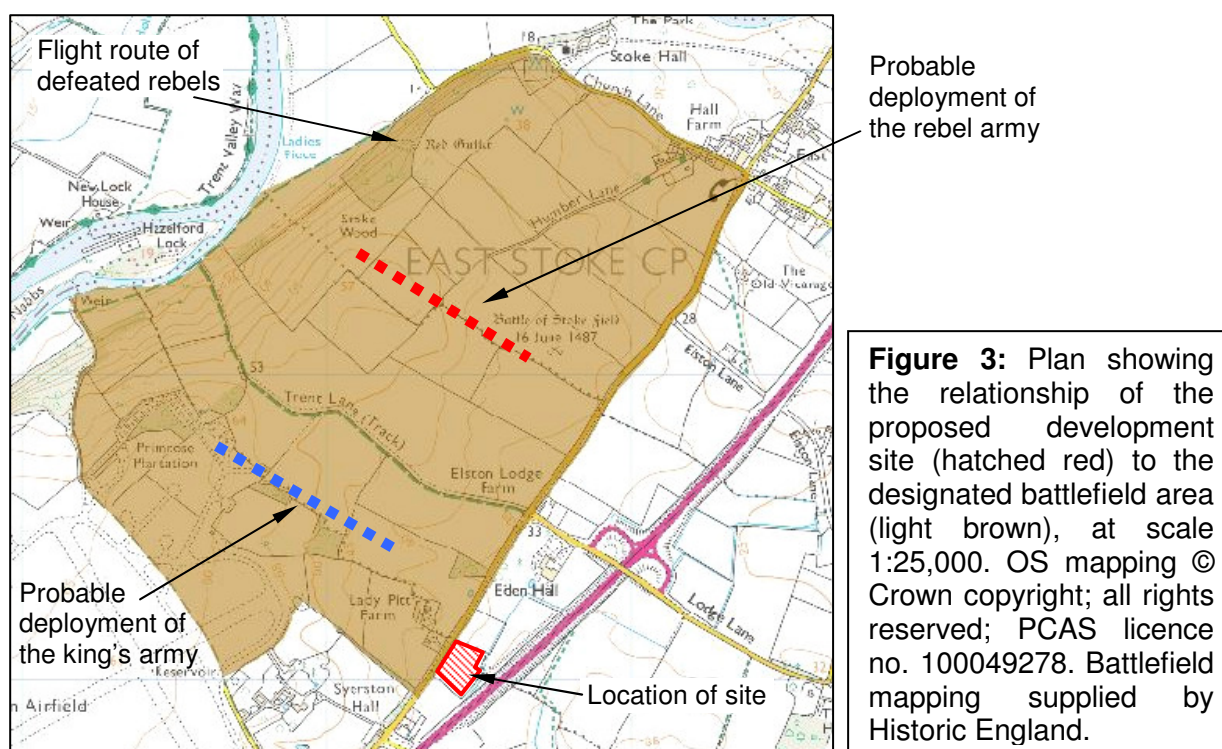
#### 4.0 Planning Background

A planning application for the construction of two agricultural storage buildings is under consideration (planning ref. 15/00912/FULM). The Historic England (formerly English Heritage) Inspector of Ancient Monuments has recommended that a programme of archaeological investigation is required pre-determination, in order to inform the design and access of the proposed development to ensure that potential harm to the adjacent registered battlefield and Roman road is minimised and mitigated. The results of this scheme of archaeological investigation will be presented in support of the application, with a further mitigation strategy based on its results if required.

## 5.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

The site borders on the historic Fosse Way, which follows the route of the Roman road whose north end connected the major Roman settlements of Lincoln and Leicester. However, no remains of the Roman road or other finds from this period have yet been recorded in the neighbourhood of the site.

The Domesday Survey of AD 1086 records Syerston as a small manor belonging to the Norman landowner Berengar de Tosny, but sub-ifeudated to a man with the Saxon name of Godwine; it was occupied by only three households, and its arable and pasture land had a taxable value of 20 shillings. A still smaller manorial holding at Syerston, also with three households farming arable and pasture land, is also recorded among the manors of the thegns at the end of the Nottinghamshire Domesday; this is recorded as having belonged to Thorfridh before the Norman Conquest, but now being the king's land. A small amount of arable land also formed an outlying possession of the Bishop of Lincoln's manor of Newark (Williams and Martin, 2003, pp. 763, 779, 783).



In 1487, the Battle of Stoke Field, at which the army of King Henry VII defeated a rebel army supporting the pretender Lambert Simnel, led by the Yorkists John, Earl of Lincoln and Francis, Lord Lovell, was fought directly to the north of Syerston and the neighbouring village of East Stoke. This battle, two years after the death of King Richard III at Bosworth Field, is taken to be the final engagement of the Wars of the Roses, in which the last of the Yorkist leaders were killed or finally put to flight. Contemporary accounts of the battle are contradictory, but it has been deduced that the rebel forces were drawn up on the higher ground near Burnham Furlong, having crossed the Trent by a ford which then existed at Fiskerton, while the king's army approached along the Fosse Way, passing Syerston village; the survivors of the defeated army are believed to have fled the battlefield northwards along a gully known as 'Red Gutter' and across the Trent at the ford (EH, 1995; fig. 3). The extent of the battlefield is indicated by the discovery of a burial pit in a field to the west of the Fosse Way and opposite Foss Way Farm in Farndon, some 6km to the north-east of Syerston, during the widening of the modern A46. The pit contained the entangled remains of at least 11 articulated inhumation burials which are thought to date to the time of the battle (Mr. O.

Scott, Conservation Officer, planning comment). Four other mass graves have been recorded in the neighbourhood of East Stoke, and finds of human bones with coins and other relics in the fields to the south of East Stoke were recorded by a 19<sup>th</sup>-century historian. The boundary of the currently designated Historic Battlefield defines the outer reasonable limit of the battle, taking into account the assumed positions of the opposing forces at the outset and the focal area of the battle itself; it does not include areas over which fighting took place subsequent to the main battle (EH, 1995).

The grounds of Syerston Hall, directly to the west of the site on the north-west side of the old Fosse Way, are recorded as a historic park/garden by the Nottinghamshire Historic Environment Record, but are not designated. The hall itself is a Grade II Listed Building: it was originally built at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with rear extensions and associated outbuildings, also Grade II Listed, from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (NHLfE list entry refs. 1045563-4, 1178904).

## **6.0 Methodology**

Field staff walked 10m wide parallel transects across the survey areas, giving approximately 20% coverage of the ground surface, as the detector has an approximate 1m sweep to either side. The transects were marked as they were walked by a ranging pole or flag, which was moved successively down the transects.

All metal-detector signals were investigated by hand excavation; finds were bagged with a unique number and the locations logged using a Leica GNSS full RTK GPS accurate to  $\pm 0.10\text{m}$  or less: a summary of the finds retrieved with their GPS locations appears as Appendix 3. Obviously modern objects, such as aluminium cans and identifiable pieces of agricultural machinery, were noted but not collected (Appendix 3.1).

A written description of the site, including topography, conditions and ground cover, was made on standard PCAS record sheets, and was supplemented by digital photographs showing the local topography and survey conditions (Appendix 1).

Following the completion of the survey, the survey data was downloaded and processed and the finds cleaned and sent to Gary Taylor of ULAS for specialist assessment

The archaeological metal-detecting survey took place on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> November 2015, and was carried out by S. A. Savage. The weather was overcast throughout, with poor light and occasional heavy showers.

## **7.0 Results (fig. 4)**

A total of 34 finds were retrieved by the metal-detector survey; all were of iron. Finds were distributed sparsely and relatively evenly across the survey site, with a slight increase in density, although still insufficient to be described as a cluster, in the south corner.

None of the finds could plausibly be assigned a Roman or early medieval date. Find 6, located in the north-west corner of the site, which may have been an awl or scribing tool, is similar to known Roman examples, but also to known medieval and early medieval ones.

A single find could be identified as of late medieval to early post-medieval date: this was find 13, a 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup>-century horseshoe, found near the centre of the survey area just within the proposed footprint of the more northerly building. Three other horseshoes were identified as 17<sup>th</sup>-century or later.

Several other finds were of types that may have been medieval or post-medieval, although identification was not certain: these included a possible woodworking bit, find 33, and four iron objects that might have been chisels (finds 9, 29, 31 and 32): these were found in various locations on the site, with finds 31, 32 and 33 relatively close together in the south-east corner.

The other finds were assessed as being post-medieval or modern, where a date could be assigned at all (Appendix 2).

## **8.0 Conclusion**

Specialist study of the metal-detector finds has assessed them as being of limited potential, with no items that can be identified as pre-dating the late medieval period; none of the very small number of medieval or potentially medieval finds had any indication of a military function from which an association with Stoke Field might have been deduced. Some of the items may suggest that a blacksmith was active in the area during the late to post-medieval period, although no smithy was present in the area late enough to appear on historic Ordnance Survey mapping; the side of a main road connecting two cities would certainly be a plausible place for a blacksmith or wheelwright to be found.

## **9.0 Effectiveness of Methodology**

The methodology employed during this project was effective in assessing the archaeological potential of the development site without intrusive methods, and thereby informing the planning process.

## **10.0 Acknowledgements**

PCAS Ltd. would like to thank J. H. Walter LLP for this commission.

## **11.0 Site Archive**

As there is currently no active museum of record in the Newark and Sherwood district, the prepared site archive will remain at PCAS's office premises until work on the Civil War Centre in Newark is complete and archives can be deposited there. The museum accession number NEKMS: 2015.38 has been assigned in anticipation of deposition.

## **12.0 Bibliography**

British Geological Survey (BGS), 1996, *Nottingham: England and Wales Sheet 126, Solid and Drift Edition, 1:50,000 Provisional Series*. BGS, Keyworth.

English Heritage, 1995, *English Heritage Battlefield Report: Stoke Field 1487*.

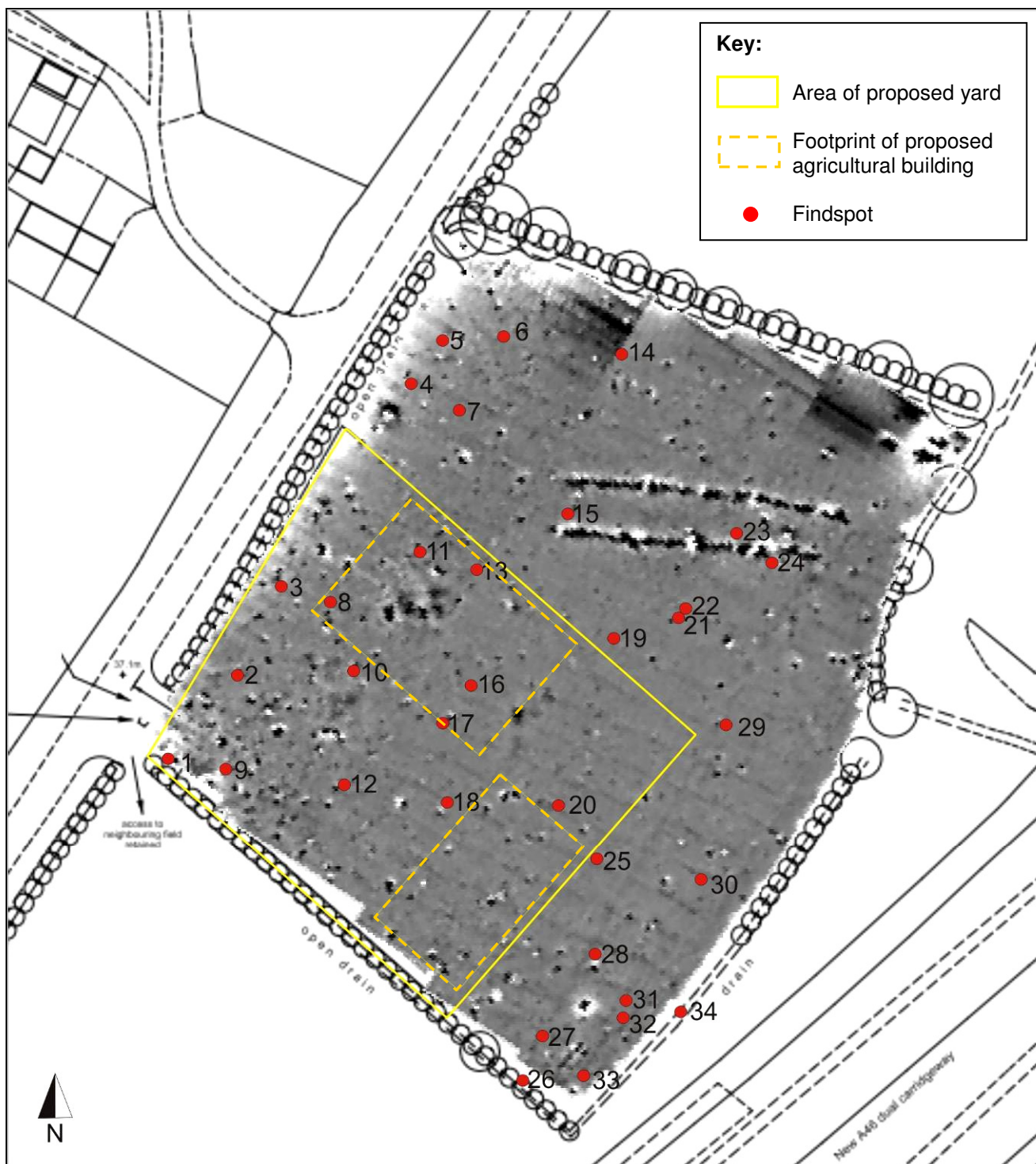
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**Figure 4:** Location plan of all finds retrieved during the metal-detector survey, at scale 1:1250, superimposed on the greyscale image of the geophysics survey results. Geophysics plot supplied by D. Bunn.

## Appendix 1: Colour Plates



**Plate 1 (above):** Composite view of the site from access at SW corner, looking NNE, NE and SE.



**Plate 2 (left):** General shot of the site, looking SW.



**Plate 3:** View across the site looking NNE towards Eden Hall, among the trees on the skyline.



**Plate 4:** Site setting view, looking NNE along the former course of the A46, with the site on the right.

## Appendix 2: Finds Report

by Gary Taylor and Denise Buckley

### Introduction

Thirty-four items together weighing 2080g were recovered.

### Condition

The ironwork is in average condition, although many pieces are showing some deterioration.

### Results

**Table 1, Other Materials**

Cxt	Material	Description	NoF	W (g)	Date
001	Iron	Possible latch rest or T-staple with one part of head missing	1	11	Post-medieval
002	Iron	Corroded sheet; possibly end of very worn horseshoe	1	20	
003	Iron? Stone?	Ironstone? natural	1	56	
004	Iron	Nail? 78mm long. Rounded domed head, rectangular shaft with chisel point	1	19	
005	Iron	Unidentified; approximately rectangular sheet with prominent sub-circular cut out at one edge	1	22	
006	Iron	Possible awl, 56mm long	1	6	
007	Iron	Nut with bolts either end, the shaft passing through a teardrop-shaped piece; possible machinery part	1	59	
008	Iron	Horseshoe fragment	1	198	?19 <sup>th</sup> century
009	Iron	Chisel, burred head. 60mm long	1	32	Medieval-post-medieval
010	Iron	Amorphous sheet	1	39	
011	Iron	Spike/nail 97mm long. Rectangular-sectioned shaft T-shaped head	1	26	
012	Iron	Nail 52mm long. Rectangular-sectioned shaft T-shaped head	1	10	
013	Iron	Horseshoe fragment, web narrowing to heel	1	133	14 <sup>th</sup> -17 <sup>th</sup> century
014	Iron	Spike 177mm long. Square bodied approx..15x15mm, tapering to a point at one end.	1	200	
015	Iron	C-shaped loop, 77mm diameter. Worn and much thinner at one end.	1	54	
016	Iron	Possible barb loop from barbed wire	1	2	19 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup> century?
017	Iron	Amorphous sheet, concave	1	60	
018	Iron	Sub-rectangular sheet. 45mm x 28mm x 3mm. Slightly curved.	1	20	
019	Iron	Nail, 83mm long. Square bodied, T-head.	1	28	
020	Iron	Nail, 47mm long, circular-sectioned shaft, round domed head	1	7	19 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup> century

Cxt	Material	Description	NoF	W (g)	Date
021	Iron	Nail, 53mm long. Oblong-sectioned shaft, chisel point, square head	1	8	
022	Iron? Stone?	Ironstone? natural	1	295	
023	Iron	Nail, 48mm long, domed head	1	8	
024	Iron	Horseshoe (front), with toe clip	1	328	Mid 19 <sup>th</sup> century+
025	Iron	Curved bar, 59mm long	1	18	
026	Iron? Stone?	Ironstone? natural	1	15	
027	Iron	Chisel/bit? 71mm long, max width 14mm, 5mm thick. One edge straight, other curved to form a gentle point at one end. Slightly flattened and splayed out at the other.	1	16	
028	Iron	Curved strip. 33mm wide, gently plano-convex section. Machinery part? Handle?	1	84	
029	Iron	Chisel? 81mm long. Oblong sectioned tapering to chisel point, apparently burred head.	1	48	Medieval-post-medieval
030	Iron	Bar 59mm long, square bodied 10x10mm	1	40	
031	Iron	Possible nail or chisel, oblong sectioned, chisel point. Very decayed, laminated fracture lines evident	1	21	Medieval-post-medieval?
032	Iron	Chisel, burred head. 60mm long	1	35	Medieval-post-medieval
033	Iron	Possible bit? 67mm long, 14mm max width, 7mm thick. One terminal is lanceolate/lozenge shaped, other narrows to a gentle point	1	16	
034	Iron	Horseshoe fragment, web narrowing slightly towards heel	1	146	Post-medieval
<b>TOTALS</b>			<b>34</b>	<b>2080</b>	

## Provenance

The finds were recovered during a metal detector survey on land directly adjacent to Stoke Field, the site of the concluding battle of the Wars of the Roses, the engagement taking place in 1487, and the route of the Fosse Way Roman road.

## Range

Item 001 is a possible latch rest. It resembles other examples found in post-medieval contexts in Norwich (Goodall 1993a, 154-5), but is rather smaller. It could, alternatively, be a T-headed staple with one branch of the down-turned head broken off.

Item 006 is perhaps an awl or scribe. It is widest at its centre point and the shaft to one side of this is circular-sectioned while the other end is rectangular. Similar examples occur in Roman contexts (Manning 1985, 25; fig 15, no 60), but the form is conservative and comparable types of medieval and early post-medieval date are known from Norwich (Goodall 1993b, 189-190).

Object 008 is a probable 19<sup>th</sup> century horseshoe (cf. Hume 1991, fig 74). Another horseshoe, 013, is of late medieval-early post-medieval type, comparable to Clark's Types 3 and 4 of the 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries (Clark 2004), though similar examples occur in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century deposits in Norwich (Goodall 1993c, 227). A complete front shoe, item 024, has a toe clip, a

feature that was introduced in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century (Hume 1991, 239). The final horseshoe, item 034, is a post-medieval type, probably of 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century date (eg, Hume fig 74).

Objects 009, 029 and 032 are likely to be chisels, probably used by a blacksmith, and 031 may be another. Similar examples occur in medieval and post-medieval levels at Norwich (Goodall 1993d, 175-6). An iron bar, item 030, may be a further indication of a blacksmith. Such bars provided the raw material that would be smithed or wrought into finished tools and objects.

Several nails were recovered. Most have rectangular-sectioned shafts though one (020) has a round shaft, indicating it is of wire. Such wire nails were introduced and developed from the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Lee 1968). The other, rectangular-shafted, nails were probably manufactured by smithing or cutting and are likely to be post-medieval in date (*ibid.*). However, nail forms are very conservative and the recovered examples could be older, though none directly resembles any of Manning's Roman nail forms (Manning 1985, 41).

There are two possible bits, 027 and 033. The identifications are not certain though 033 has a lozenge-shaped terminal that closely resembles those seen on woodworking bits of late medieval to early post-medieval date from Norwich (Goodall 1993e, 180).

Two curving bars, one of them forming a penannular loop, were recovered (015 and 025). The identity and function of these is unclear.

There are also a few pieces of probable natural ironstone, items 003, 022 and 026.

## Potential

In general, the finds are of limited potential and there is nothing of distinct military function that might have been associated with the battle of Stoke Field, nor are there any obvious Roman items. Few of the items are closely datable but those that are mainly post-medieval to early modern. There are several possible chisels and a couple of other, incomplete, tools, possibly bits. These suggest the activities of metal and/or wood workers in the area.

## ABBREVIATIONS

CXT	Context
NoF	Number of Fragments
W (g)	Weight (grams)

## REFERENCES

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### Appendix 3: Index of finds with 3-D GPS locations

Cxt	Material	Description	NoF	W (g)	Date	GPS	height
1	Iron	Possible latch rest or T-staple with one part of head missing	1	11	Post-medieval	474357.744,348023.743	36.423
2	Iron	Corroded sheet; possibly end of very worn horseshoe	1	20		474371.232,348041.714	36.46
3	Iron? Stone?	Ironstone? natural	1	56		474381.892,348060.691	36.497
4	Iron	Nail? 78mm long. Rounded domed head, rectangular shaft with chisel point	1	19		474408.683,348103.436	36.148
5	Iron	Unidentified; approximately rectangular sheet with prominent sub-circular cut out at one edge	1	22		474414.938,348112.278	36.101
6	Iron	Possible awl, 56mm long	1	6		474427.565,348113.561	35.585
7	Iron	Nut with bolts either end, the shaft passing through a teardrop-shaped piece; possible machinery part	1	59		474418.135,348098.234	35.658
8	Iron	Horseshoe fragment	1	198	?19th century	474391.882,348056.097	35.984
9	Iron	Chisel, burred head. 60mm long	1	32	Medieval-post-medieval	474369.853,348021.737	36.066
10	Iron	Amorphous sheet	1	39		474396.598,348042.816	35.622
11	Iron	Spike/nail 97mm long. Rectangular-sectioned shaft T-shaped head	1	26		474410.819,348067.129	35.396
12	Iron	Nail 52mm long. Rectangular-sectioned shaft T-shaped head	1	10		474394.677,348021.188	35.377
13	Iron	Horseshoe fragment, web narrowing to heel	1	133	14th-17th century	474422.290,348063.214	34.914
14	Iron	Spike 177mm long. Square bodied approx..15x15mm, tapering to a point at one end.	1	200		474452.665,348111.847	34.732
15	Iron	C-shaped loop, 77mm diameter. Worn and much thinner at one end.	1	54		474441.750,348076.224	34.414
16	Iron	Possible barb loop from barbed wire	1	2	19th-20th century?	474420.875,348040.698	34.631
17	Iron	Amorphous sheet, concave	1	60		474414.748,348030.862	34.739
18	Iron	Sub-rectangular sheet. 45mm x 28mm x 3mm. Slightly curved.	1	20		474416.094,348015.401	34.893

Cxt	Material	Description	NoF	W (g)	Date	GPS	height
19	Iron	Nail, 83mm long. Square bodied, T-head.	1	28		474451.559,348050.539	34.074
20	Iron	Nail, 47mm long, circular-sectioned shaft, round domed head	1	7	19th-20th century	474440.638,348014.183	34.38
21	Iron	Nail, 53mm long. Oblong-sectioned shaft, chisel point, square head	1	8		474465.912,348055.959	33.806
22	Iron? Stone?	Ironstone? natural	1	295		474466.903,348056.921	33.805
23	Iron	Nail, 48mm long, domed head	1	8		474477.974,348072.495	33.686
24	Iron	Horseshoe (front), with toe clip	1	328	Mid 19th century+	474485.122,348066.953	33.563
25	Iron	Curved bar, 59mm long	1	18		474448.767,348004.195	34.354
26	Iron? Stone?	Ironstone? natural	1	15		474433.043,347957.901	35.429
27	Iron	Chisel/bit? 71mm long, max width 14mm, 5mm thick. One edge straight, other curved to form a gentle point at one end. Slightly flattened and splayed out at the other.	1	16		474437.474,347966.357	35.064
28	Iron	Curved strip. 33mm wide, gently plano-convex section. Machinery part? Handle?	1	84		474448.413,347983.647	34.739
29	Iron	Chisel? 81mm long. Oblong sectioned tapering to chisel point, apparently burred head.	1	48	Medieval-post-medieval	474475.484,348032.156	33.861
30	Iron	Bar 59mm long, square bodied 10x10mm	1	40		474470.997,347999.436	
31	Iron	Possible nail or chisel, oblong sectioned, chisel point. Very decayed, laminated fracture lines evident	1	21	Medieval-post-medieval?	474455.666,347973.269	34.777
32	Iron	Chisel, burred head. 60mm long	1	35	Medieval-post-medieval	474454.239,347970.076	34.86
33	Iron	Possible bit? 67mm long, 14mm max width, 7mm thick. One terminal is lanceolate/lozenge shaped, other narrows to a gentle point	1	16		474446.166,347957.218	35.211



Cxt	Material	Description	NoF	W (g)	Date	GPS	height
34	Iron	Horseshoe fragment, web narrowing slightly towards heel	1	146	Post-medieval	474466.578,347971.822	34.753

### Appendix 3.1: Index of finds discarded on site

- 1x heavy Allen bolt, transect 1
- 1x 4" threaded bolt with no head, transect 1
- 2x small fragments of iron sheet, transects 2 and 3
- 2x modern wire nails, transects 3 and 6
- 1x hex nut, transect 4
- 1x square-headed short bolt, transect 5
- 2x fragments of cast-iron, transect 7
- 1x 1½" iron strap, transect 9
- 3x hex bolts, transects 7 and 10
- 2x fragments of wire, transects 8 and 10

**Appendix 4:**