A metal detection survey over a 2.6% sample of the Registered 1644 Battlefield of Cheriton yielded 355 metallic small finds, of which 92% were directly related to the battle. An archaeological analysis of the sample emphasises the use of non-valuable small finds as an aid to understanding the location, direction and participants of battle. An appreciation of battle and the actions of warfare has been indicated via the social and functional aspects of weaponry. The finds have been assessed within their Civil War context and indicate that the presumed extent of the battlefield could be much larger than previously thought. The distribution of the finds confirms that the retreating Royalist army were pursued as they fled. Individual regiments within the armies have been identified based on find typology and distribution, to build up a coherent interpretation of the battle.

Introduction

This pilot study seeks to emphasise the benefits of the detection, mapping and recovery of non-valuable small finds as an aid to understanding the spatial extent of a battlefield. The study demonstrates the benefits of a multi-disciplined approach to the 1644 Civil War Battlefield of Cheriton, near Winchester, Hampshire, United Kingdom. The ‘battlefield’ discussed here is defined by the geographical limits of the English Heritage Register of Historic Battlefields. The pilot study area concentrated on a single field (Dark Copse Field) on the battlefield. 355 non-contextual metallic small finds were recovered from the topsoil of the study area using metal detection. The analysis of these finds forms a basis for a pilot study and for future research. The metallic small finds analysis represents a body of evidence recovered systematically over an 18 year period, complemented by auger surveys, aerial photography and regression analysis of local mapping. A social context of human activity in warfare is explored through the weaponry of the soldiers to demonstrate the bloody violence of the battlefield. These studies provide new and relevant information pertaining to the archaeological understanding of the Royalist retreat from the Battle of Cheriton.

The study area of Dark Copse Field is situated on the northern extent of the 454 ha Registered Battlefield, 1 km NNE of Cheriton village, Hampshire, in the south of England (Figure 1). The historic city of Winchester lies 10 km to the west, and the town of Alresford lies 3 km to the north. Dark Copse
Field rises sharply to form a plateau, commanding an extensive view of the surrounding area. The view of the Cheriton Battlefield from Dark Copse Field is one of undulating land obscuring successive valleys. To the north and north-east, the study area is bounded by Dark Copse, a small wood from which the field is named. The study area lays on chalk bedrock, which is overlain by clay in the northern half of the field, whilst the southern half contains no clay, only a rich sub-soil.

The Battle of Cheriton, despite a listing on the English Heritage Battlefield’s Register, is poorly understood from an archaeological perspective. Primary and secondary written source material has been investigated and evaluated thoroughly (Godwin 1918; Gardiner 1987; Adair 1973), but no archaeological study has occurred on the battlefield. The small finds have been identified (insofar as possible) with the aim of determining if the study area of Dark Copse Field featured in the battle as suggested by the Battlefield Register. Other objectives of the study include tracing the course of battle, addressing the issue of a disputed location for the battle and mapping the historically suggested retreat of the Royalist Army through the study area.

An understanding of battlefield events has been enhanced by the recovery and distribution of small finds via metal detection to trace the battle. The study of Dark Copse Field is interdisciplinary and draws on themes devel-