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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief of the stripping of the topsoil for a one-hectare extension to the existing quarry at North Stainley. The site lies immediately to the east of the village of North Stainley *c.* 6km to the north west of Ripon, North Yorkshire, centred on NGR SE 2905 7710 (Figure 1) in the parish of North Stainley with Slenningford.
- 1.2 The watching brief was a result of an earlier report for the Environmental Statement into the archaeological and historic background for an extension of the quarry (Cheetham and Clarke 1998). This report was in the form of a desk-based assessment into the study area which resulted in a series of recommendations for further work, one of which was the archaeological monitoring of the topsoil strip for any extensions to the quarry (McIlwaine, 1999).
- 1.3 The monitoring was conducted by John Buglass of JB Archaeological Services for the Department of Archaeological Sciences, University of Bradford on behalf of Hanson Aggregates and took place over two days, the 5th and 6th May 2005.
- 1.4 The area stripped was *c.* one hectare, with an adjacent 10m strip on which the topsoil was stockpiled (Figure 2).
- 1.5 The watching brief was intended to monitor for any buried archaeological remains, which the earth stripping might reveal or disturb. There was a provision for further archaeological works of any subsequent ground works if the initial work revealed anything of archaeological significance.

2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Site location

- 2.1 The site of the extension to the quarry was immediately to the east of the village of North Stainley and to the west of the existing extraction works (Figures 1 and 2). The area for extraction was slightly modified and instead of the top- and subsoil bunds being located along the western edge of the field they were located in a north-east to south-west direction (Figure 2). The area was of an irregular shape extending westwards for *c.* 600m from the current Plant Site within the quarry, an area of approximately one hectare.

Geology and soils

- 2.2 The underlying geology of the site is one of Triassic sandstones, overlying this is a substantial deposit of alluvial sands and gravels and glacial till.

Topography and land-use

- 2.3 The area of the extension is part of the relatively flat valley floor of the River Ure at an approximate height of 40m OD. The land is currently used for arable farming with

small areas of woodland along the western edge of the site and proposed residential development along the eastern boundary.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The archaeological and historic evidence for human activity within the study area for the quarry are detailed in previous reports (Cheetham and Clarke 1998, McIlwaine, 1999 and Buglass 2004) and a summary of that work is given below.

Prehistoric

- 3.2 There is widespread evidence for an extensive prehistoric landscape around the quarry site, most significantly the henge complex to the north at Thornborough. However, there was no substantial evidence for prehistoric activity within the area of the extension.

Roman

- 3.3 Despite the recovery of a single pot sherd of potential Roman date (McIlwaine, 1999, 6) during the field-walking of Zone A to the south-west there was no other potential for Roman sites.

Medieval

- 3.4 Although there was no direct evidence for medieval activity within the quarry extension the settlement of North Stainley to the west is probably of post-Roman origin and is definitely recorded as a settlement during the medieval period. The evidence for this comes from the settlements' place name. North Stainley is first recorded in *c.*972 as *Stanleh* and later in the Domesday Book of 1086 as *Nordstanlaia*. The name originally being derived from the Old English *stan* meaning stony (later replaced by the Old Scandinavian *steinn*) (Mills 1998, 322) and *leah* meaning forest, wood, glade, clearing and later pasture or meadow (Gelling, 1984, 198). This suggests the area was cleared of woodland in order to establish the settlement with its associated agriculture.

- 3.5 With the known presence of this settlement from an early medieval date there is a strong possibility that the area between the settlement and the river was used for farming and may still exhibit the remains of ridge and furrow agriculture typical of that era. The potential for survival of this evidence is very dependent upon the intensity of modern farming techniques, which can often destroy archaeological remains through deep ploughing. The results of the earlier geophysical survey showed that there was a strong possibility that deep ploughing had occurred in Zone A to the south-west and this is likely to have also occurred within the proposed extension as well. Examination of the Ordnance Survey 1st edition of 1856 shows the field boundaries in the area of the proposed extension to be slightly curved which may indicate the remains of ridge and furrow agriculture.

Post-medieval and modern

- 3.6 The settlement of North Stainley during the post-medieval period is well attested to in the cartographic record and can be seen to slowly expand over time as it has developed. Most recently small-scale housing estates have been constructed on the outskirts of the earlier settlement.

- 3.7 Besides housing other recorded post-medieval activity includes Stainley Mill on the northern edge of the quarry along with its associated water management regime, a gravel extraction pit to the south-west of Stainley Mill and a possible drove way for cattle running along the southern boundary of the study area.

4.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 4.1 The objective of the watching brief was to identify and record any features of archaeological interest revealed or damaged during the groundworks for the quarry expansion. The specific aims were to:

- examine any areas of potential archaeological interest within the extension so that a mitigation strategy might be employed for the recovery of archaeological information;
- record graphically and photographically any archaeological features revealed by the topsoil stripping of the extension;
- recover any archaeological artefacts and environmental material exposed by the topsoil stripping.

5.0 METHODOLOGY

- 5.1 The stripping of the topsoil in the area of the extension was undertaken using a tracked excavator with a toothless bucket. The stripping was carried out in swathes approximately 15m wide. The topsoil was then moved by dumpers to the bund. The topsoil stripping was carried out under direct archaeological supervision. As it was not possible to drive the dumpers over the exposed subsoil due to high levels of ground water they instead drove across the unstripped areas of the extension. This resulted in very deep rutting and topsoil being compressed into the subsoil and potentially masking archaeological deposits (Plate 1).

- 5.2 During topsoil stripping the subsoil was inspected for archaeological features and the resulting topsoil stockpile was monitored for archaeological artefacts.

- 5.3 Drawings were produced of the archaeological feature encountered, and this was also recorded photographically, on both colour slide and black and white print film formats, using 1m and 2m bi-coloured poles for scale and a north pointer for orientation.

6.0 RESULTS

- 6.1 Very little was observed in the way of archaeological or potential archaeological features. The most obvious remains were the 'herring bone' pattern of field drains. These were most notably present on the north-eastern side of the site and relate to the linear trends identified in the earlier geophysical survey.

- 6.2 Sample excavation of one of the drains was attempted in order to confirm their presence but the high ground water level prevented excavation below a c.0.30m from the top of the subsoil. However, broken remains of extruded ceramic land-drains were observed in to top of the backfill of several of these features.
- 6.3 There was wide spread evidence for modern ploughing in the form of a regular pattern of plough scars in the top of the subsoil running parallel to the existing field boundary on the north-eastern side of the site.
- 6.4 The only feature of archaeological significance was the heavily truncated remains of a small pit or posthole recorded on the north-eastern edge of the extension (Figure 2, Plate 2). The feature was c.0.40m in diameter and c.0.10m, the sides were irregular and had a gradually curved, concave base deep (39.25mOD at base of cut). The feature was cut (03) into the underlying natural (04), which consisted of medium to well rounded gravel deposits with a high proportion of silty-clay sediment (Figure 3). The feature was filled with a single context (02) which contained a mixture of iron slag and burnt material, possibly hearth lining. Due to the high clay content of the subsoil it is possible to state that this material had not been burnt *in situ* as there was no discoloration of the surrounding sediment and was therefore discarded.
- 6.5 The feature was recorded and a 100% sample taken of its contents, this was then wet sieved, air-dried and the residue sorted (see Appendix I for details). The results of this revealed not only slag and burnt material but also small quantities of charcoal. Analysis of the slag showed that it was of ferrous origin and had been quite liquid in its hot state. The material is small in quantity and rather undiagnostic and so without additional material is difficult to draw any further conclusions as to whether it is evidence of smelting or smithying. Whilst some charcoal was also uncovered it seems unlikely that any significant metalworking activity had taken place as this would have shown clearly on the geophysical survey. It would therefore appear that this is a relatively small deposit which if it had been more substantial has most likely been destroyed by latter ploughing. No dating material was recovered.
- 6.6 The only other material recovered during the monitoring was a single piece of flint and a fragment of coarse mid/dark grey fabric earthenware pottery, both from the topsoil/subsoil interface.

7.0 DISCUSSION and CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 Previous research had shown that there was a low potential for archaeological remains to survive within the area of the extension this was borne out during the monitoring of the topsoil strip. Of the features observed the majority were of post-medieval/modern origin and were as a result of agricultural practice.
- 7.2 The only archaeological feature recorded was the truncated base of a pit or posthole, which contained ferrous metal working waste bit more in here when know what the stuff is. This would seem to indicate the presence of some sort of activity within the immediate vicinity as this sort of waste material in not likely to be transported far prior to disposal. However, the intensive ploughing of the land appears to have removed any other features.

7.3

Bibliography

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Gelling M, 1984, *Place Names in the Landscape*. Phoenix Press. London.

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Mills AD (1998) *Dictionary of English Place Names*. Oxford University Press

Map

1856 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 6" series

APPENDIX I

Soil Processing

A 100% sample of the feature was collected (c.10kg). This was then wet sieved through a 5mm sieve. The resulting 5kg of residue was then air dried and sorted by eye for the following material, slag, burnt material and charcoal.

A total of 1.1kg of slag, 0.4kg of burnt material and 47g of charcoal was recovered. This material was then subject to specialist analysis. The results of this analysis was that it was the material was fairly undiagnostic but hinted that there may be some low level metal working activity in the area.

APPENDIX II

Context Catalogue

01	Topsoil	Silty loam with a high clay content, modern roots etc.
02	Fill of posthole/pit	Medium to well rounded gravel in a silty-clay matrix with a moderate amount of organic material. Filled with a single context which contained a mixture of iron slag and burnt material
03	Cut for posthole/pit	Irregular side with a gradually curved, concave base.
04	Natural	Medium to well rounded gravel deposits with a high proportion of silty-clay sediment.