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LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

**Tattershall Thorpe Quarry Extension
Topsoil Removal, Phases 3-5 (New Farm)**

Archaeological Watching Brief

NGR: TF 2155 6062

Site Code TQC 99

LCNCC Museum Accn. No. 72.99

Lincs. County Council Planning Application No. (E)S.176/2058/94

**Report prepared for
RMC Aggregates (Eastern) Ltd**

March 2000

LAS Report No. 386

Lincolnshire County Council
Archaeology Section

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Summary

An archaeological watching brief during a further phase of topsoil removal on the expanding sand and gravel quarry site identified no features of archaeological interest. One struck flint and several possibly worked pieces of flint gravel were found, although the distribution was very thin with no apparent clustering.

Introduction

Lindsey Archaeological Services (LAS) was commissioned in March 1999 by Oxford Archaeological Associates Ltd (OAA) on behalf of RMC Aggregates (Eastern) Ltd to conduct an archaeological watching brief during topsoil removal for an extension to the sand and gravel quarry at New Farm, Tattershall Thorpe (Fig. 1). The watching brief was required by Lincolnshire County Council to fulfil part of a Section 108 Agreement. The works represented the fourth and fifth phases of monitoring within the scheme (Fig. 2).

Groundworks were monitored by Sue Farr and Geoff Tann between 6th April and 11th August 1999; monitoring began as continual and was reduced at intervals with the consent of the County Archaeology Section. For part of the period, no topsoil was removed. 25 visits were made to the site.

Planning and Archaeological Background

The area lies within the site of the former RAF Woodhall wartime airfield (Griffiths and Collcutt 1994; Taylor 1996).

Sand and gravel has been extracted from a large area in the NE of the former airfield 1km NE of the B1192 Tattershall - Woodhall Spa road. The present Tattershall Thorpe Quarry is operated by RMC Aggregates (Eastern) Ltd (RMC). An application (No. (E)S.176/2058/94) to extend extraction across land in the southern half of the airfield was approved by Lincolnshire County Council in August 1996.

In support of this application, RMC had commissioned OAA (acting as archaeological consultants to RMC (UK) Ltd) to prepare a documentary assessment of the archaeological implications of the proposal (Griffiths and Collcutt 1994). Air photographs indicated a possible Iron Age enclosure within the Phase 1 area. The assessment report noted a possible Roman site, reported in 1929, close to the New Park Farm buildings (later developed as barrack buildings) and within the areas of extraction phases 2-4 (Fig. 2). Numerous casual finds of prehistoric flint artefacts and Roman coins have been found at quarries elsewhere in Tattershall Thorpe and archaeological

excavations of important Neolithic and Iron Age sites have been carried out nearby.

A fieldwalking survey was commissioned by OAA on behalf of RMC, and conducted by Lindsey Archaeological Services in early February 1996 (Taylor 1996). An area of 49ha was examined within the area of the planning application and archaeological finds from the exposed field surfaces were plotted. Only Neolithic/Bronze Age flint artefacts were recovered, mostly in Areas 8, 5 and 1 to the west and SW of the New Park Farm buildings (Fig. 2). Area 2 produced no archaeologically significant material and Area 3 produced a very low density of flints (1.29 per hectare) but no other finds.

Lincolnshire County Council placed an archaeological condition (Condition 11) on the Planning Consent requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, in order to ensure adequate opportunities are afforded for the investigation and protection of the archaeological interests of the site. The condition resulted in provision for an intensive watching brief. Phase 1, in 1996, produced a single unstratified worked flint and a possible enclosure of either medieval or later date (Tann 1996). During Phases 2 and 3 in 1996 and 1997, several drainage features were excavated which were related to the former airfield, and a series of earlier agricultural drainage ditches were found (Williams 1997). No monitoring was undertaken during 1998.

The Watching Brief

Method

Topsoil was stripped by a 360° excavator fitted with a 1m wide bucket with a plate covering the teeth. The dumper trucks travelled to and from the topsoil heap on unstripped ground, so as to avoid damage to the stripped surface.

Work for this season commenced at the southern limit of the extraction consent, beside a perimeter earth bund to the south of Phase 3 (Pl. 1). As the area of sand quarrying extended, topsoil removal worked along the southern edge of the areas of Phases 4 and 5, before moving initially alongside the western edge of Phase 3 and then progressively up a slope towards the farm buildings, across both Phases 4 and 5. To the south of the quarry workings, the ground was stubble or uncultivated, but most of the area was under an unharvested potato crop from the previous season.

Monitoring ceased as the topsoil removal approached the standing farm buildings as this area was clearly badly disturbed by airfield features and modern land drains.

The Site Code sequence used for earlier phases of the monitoring programme (TQA in 1996, TQB in 1997) was continued, with TQC 99 being used. Context numbers, in a block of consecutive numbers from 100-112 were assigned to each feature plotted or described. A summary list is appended (Appendix 1).

Results

The uppermost natural deposits in this area, as in Phases 2 and 3, are a series of sands and gravels which vary in colour from white through yellow to brown. Numerous depressions in the natural sand were observed and many were investigated but none indicated human agency. Frequent small patches of discoloured sand were interpreted as the result of mineral leaching at the sites of uprooted bushes and trees.

Along the southern edge of the Phase 3 area, several segments of east-west, north-south, and NW-SE aligned linear ditches were revealed (Pls. 2-4). These features (recorded examples 103, 105) varied in width from about 0.5m to 1.25m, with a depth beneath the modern ground surface of about 0.6m. To the west, within 100m north of the topsoil bund south of Phases 4 and 5, further examples were seen. These were also linear and of two widths or phases which were connected. All contained a dark brown or black loamy sand fill. In a few instances land drains of varying dates were found at the base, suggesting that they were former field boundary ditches, some of which were drained in advance of backfilling and field amalgamation (Pl. 5). Most of these ditches were devoid of any observed dating material, but the arrangement was suspected to have been of post-medieval date. Only two of the observed features, 40m south of the farmhouse, and another alongside the western Phase 3 quarry extent, are depicted on the earliest Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 map (Pl. 6; OS 1891). The features revealed during the early period of intensive monitoring were recorded, but later similar examples were revealed in less suitable conditions and were not planned.

A further articulated animal skeleton was found in a shallow grave lined with lime, close to the farm (Pl. 7).

Discussion and Conclusion

The watching brief uncovered further evidence of extensive drainage programmes associated with agricultural use of the land and the airbase. The nature of the ditches and the similarity of their fills to the topsoil suggest that they were filled with the same ploughsoil and therefore relatively recent.

The numerous soil discolourations noted across the site are considered to be natural in origin.

A reappraisal of the information relating to the possible Roman site SMR 40130 was undertaken by the author after completion of the watching brief in an attempt to explain the complete absence of Roman pottery or features. The present location of the findspot appears to date from August 1929, when the Ordnance Survey fieldworker C.W. Phillips entered a note in pencil in the margin of a 1906 Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 map Sheet 89NW. The note clearly relates to an area ringed in pencil on the map, including the New Farm buildings and land to the south, east and north. The pencil ring extends beyond the map borders but no annotation appears on the bordering map sheets. A OS fieldworker in 1964 seems responsible for a typed note on an index card which bears a grid reference 1km to the north (confusingly also within the former airfield), but which explicitly refers to Phillips' marginal note.

The lengthy marginal note, initialled and dated, begins with the statement '*The supposed Roman sites here are a complete mystery at present. The ground is all quite flat and there is much sand in the soil. The farmer knew nothing at all but showed me some curious stones... some of the lumps...*'. The description of the stones or 'lumps' reads as a iron concretion of the gravel, and despite Phillip's reluctance to identify them as natural, natural concretions of gravel seen during the watching brief may well be very similar to those recorded. The term 'lumps' was not used to describe anomalies in the ground surface: that inference resulted from a praesy of his note written on a much later Lincoln museum index card.

The main problem is establishing why Phillips chose to examine the area around New Park Farm. The 'sites' are believed to be those mentioned in Gough's 1806 edition of Camden's *Britannia*, recorded as having been discovered by the Rev. Mr Dyer, Rector of Coningsby. They were described as 'two encampments on a flat moor bordering the fens in Tattershall Park'. The reasons for the Ordnance Survey field worker equating the reference with New Farm are not clear. It is possible that no earthworks were ever identified in the vicinity of Phases 4 and 5.

The third season of monitoring all topsoil stripping again produced insignificant archaeological results. Mechanical removal of the light topsoil with a large capacity bucket results in some removal of the underlying sand, and the resultant stripped surface is uneven (Pls. 8 and 9). The faster the process is conducted, the less is visible on the underlying sand. Although the dark fills of modern features can be followed across the site despite these conditions, the methods are unsuited to recognition of early features, and Roman and earlier features might only be visible from artefact concentrations. None of these have yet been observed. The compromise between archaeological observation and efficient topsoil stripping is not satisfactory because of the softness of the material below the topsoil, and a better method may be needed to ensure that significant archaeological remains are identified and recorded during future phases of the quarry extension.

Acknowledgements

LAS is grateful to Andy Wright (Quarry Manager), staff at the Tattershall Quarry and their contractors for their full co-operation. Simon Colcutt and Dave Griffiths (Oxford Archaeological Associates, archaeological consultants to RMC) helped with liaison and supplied advice and comment. Steve Catney (County Archaeological Officer), and the staff of the County Archaeological Section provided information and advice.

The report was produced and collated by Jane Frost.

Geoff Tann
Lindsey Archaeological Services
29th March 2000

APPENDIX 1

Context Summary

Context No.	Type	Description	Date
100	topsoil	0.45m - 0.6m thick layer of dark grey/brown sandy loam with gravel inclusions	modern
101	subsoil	mottled dark grey/brown sand mixed with red/brown and orange sand, and gravel inclusions. 0.24m thick. Probably a mix of topsoil with sand deposits produced by root action and ploughing.	disturbed
102	natural sands	Sands, varying in colour from orange to grey and white; mixed with gravels.	natural
103	ditch	E-W aligned; 0.4m wide and 0.1m surviving depth; rounded base; filled by 104. Tree throw holes, perhaps from former hedge, seen beside this feature.	?WWII
104	fill of 103	ditch Dark brown/black humic ?desiccated peat deposit with chalk lumps and blue/green clay.	?WWII
105	ditch	East-west aligned; 0.55m wide and 0.12m surviving depth. Filled by 106. Possibly a continuation of or contemporary with ditch 103.	?WWII
106	fill of 105	ditch Dark brown/black humic ?desiccated peat deposit.	?WWII
107	ditch	East-west aligned; 1.2m wide, and 0.3m surviving depth, with rounded base. Probably cuts 109. This ditch marks the northern limit of particularly marshy ground. This feature might possibly be a medieval or later plough furrow.	?medieval or later
108	fill of 107	ditch Brown/grey sand.	?medieval or later
109	ditch	North-south aligned; 2m wide, surviving depth 0.2m. Filled by 110. Slight possibility that this is a natural feature.	?natural or ?medieval or later
110	fill of 109	ditch Dark brown/black sand fill. ?Cut by 107.	?natural or ?medieval or later
111	ditch	NW-SE aligned; 3m wide, 0.35m surviving depth. Numerous land drains laid along the line of this ditch.	?medieval or later
112	fill of	ditch Dark grey/black sand with desiccated	?medieval or later

	111	peat.	
113	ditch	SW-NE aligned, 1.2m wide, 0.5m surviving depth. Filled by 114.	post-medieval
114	fill of ditch	Dark grey/brown sand with loam. Infrequent chalk lumps.	modern
115	animal burial	Ovoid shallow grave lined with lime, containing articulated skeleton of sheep or calf.	modern

References

Griffiths, D.W. and Collcutt, S.N. 1994 *Land at New Park Farm, Tattershall Thorpe, Lincolnshire: Archaeological Assessment* (OAA report for RMC).

OS 1890 *Ordnance Survey First Edition 1:10,560 map*, Sheets 80 SE (surveyed 1887).

OS 1891 *Ordnance Survey 1st edition 1:10,560 map*, Sheets 81SW, 88NE and 89 NW (surveyed 1887).

Tann, G. 1996 *Land at New Park Farm, Tattershall Thorpe: Archaeological Monitoring of Topsoil Stripping Phase 1b of the Tattershall Quarry Extension* (LAS report for Butterley Aggregates, LAS report no. 217).

Taylor, C. 1996 *Proposal for Gravel Extraction, New Park Farm Tattershall Thorpe: Fieldwalking Survey* (LAS report for Butterley Aggregates, LAS report no. 183).

Williams, M. 1997 *Land at New Park Farm, Tattershall Thorpe: Archaeological Monitoring of Topsoil Stripping Phases 2-3 of the Tattershall Quarry Extension*. LAS report for Butterley Aggregates, LAS report no. 258).

Archive Summary

Correspondence

Developer's plans and annotated copies

Field sketch plan

Photographs: LAS colour print film nos. 99/24/2-32; 99/31/14-21; 99/109/0-3 (including those used in this report).

Archaeological finds: Flints SF

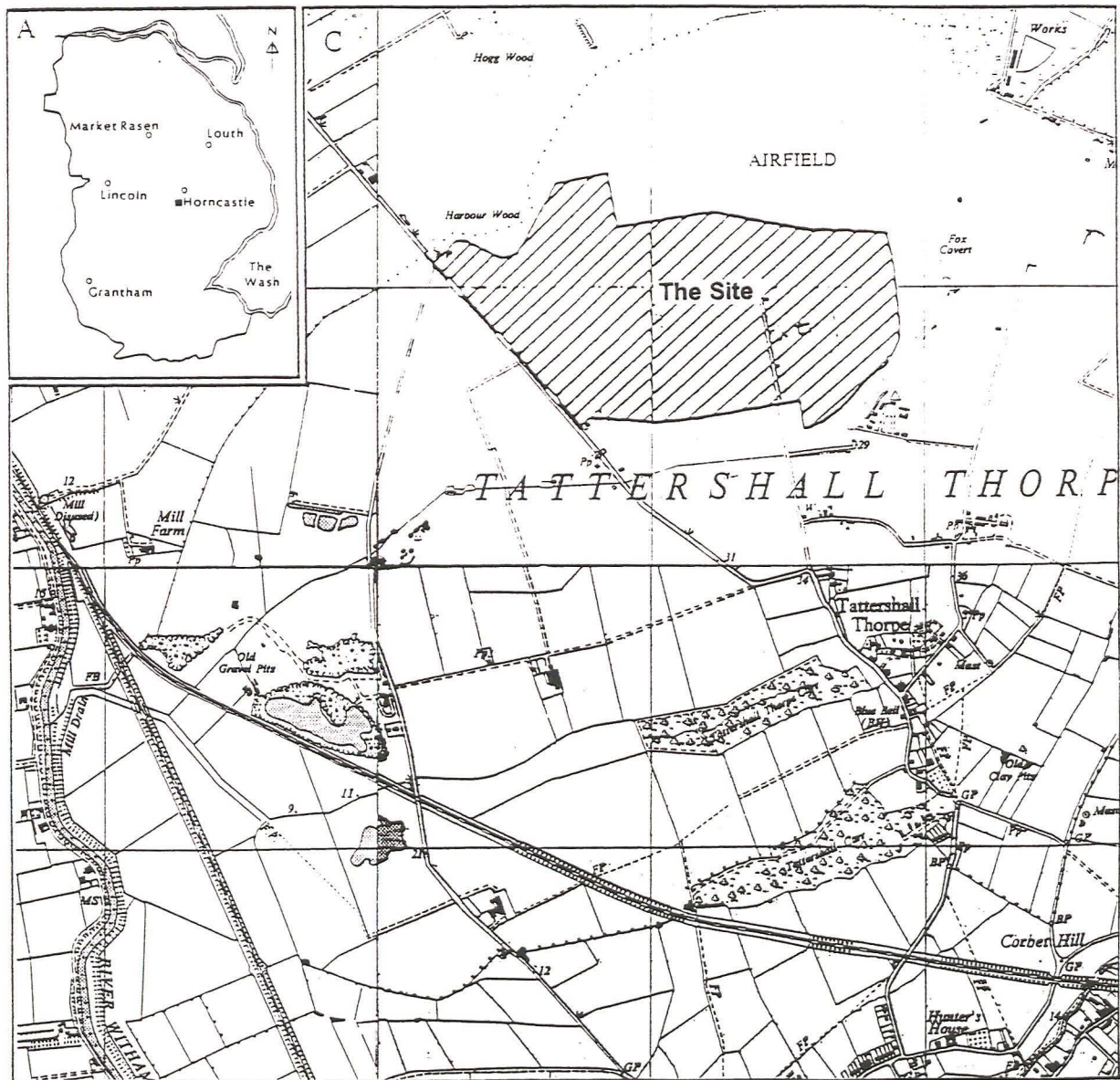
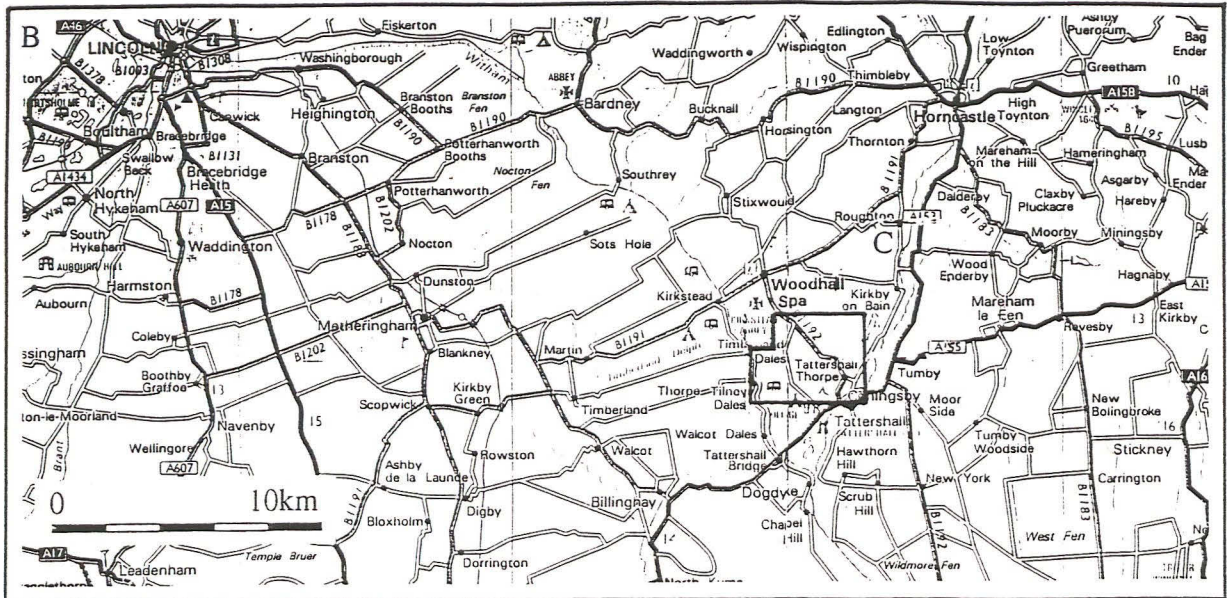


Fig. 1 Location of Tattershall Thorpe. Inset C based on the 1955 Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 map Sheets TF 15, TF 16, TF 25 and TF 26. Crown Copyright, reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO. LAS Licence No. AL 50424A.

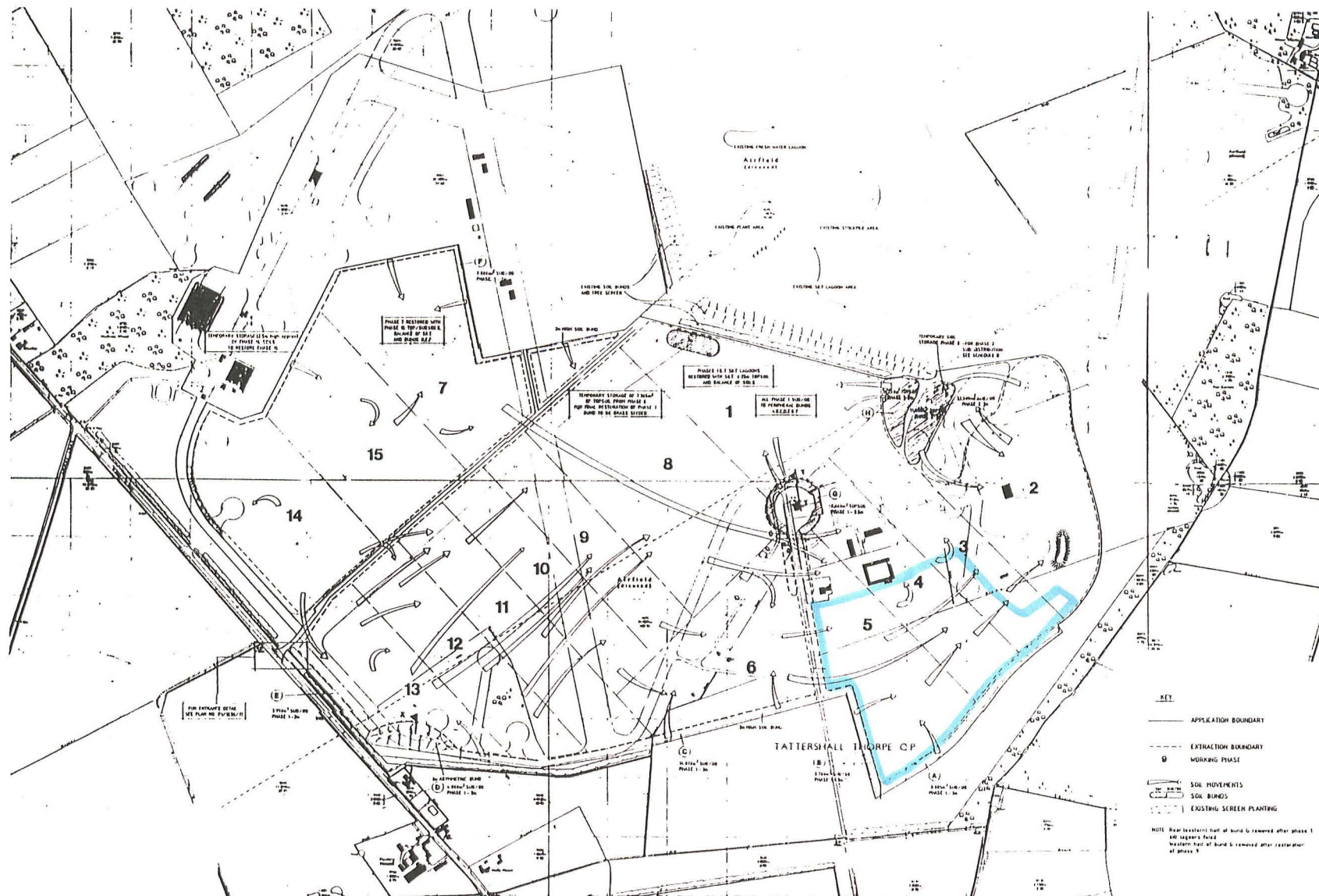


Fig. 2 Tattershall Thorpe Quarry, showing the areas worked in Phases 2-5 (based on a reduced scale copy of Dwg. no. P1/1236/19/3 supplied by RMC Aggregates).



Pl. 1 Topsoil stripping along the southern edge of the Phase 3 area (looking east).

Pl. 2 Dark soil fill of ditch 103 showing after topsoil removal south of Phase 3. Looking SE.

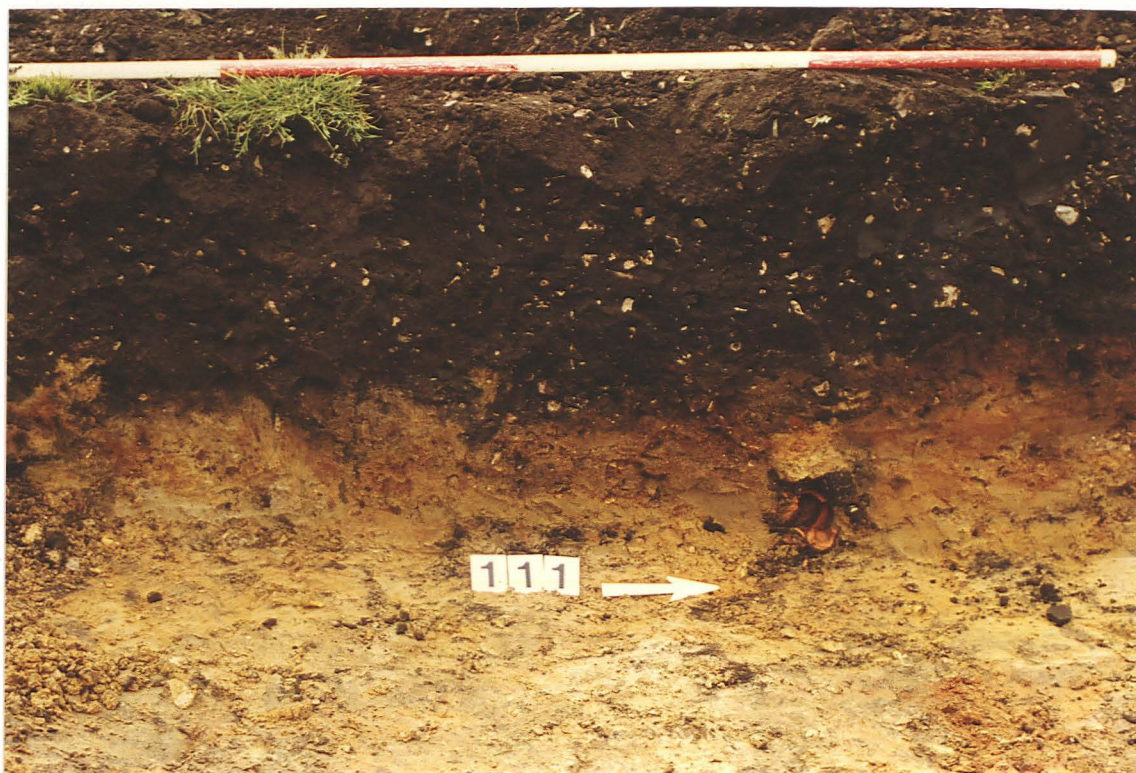




Pl. 3 Ditch 103 after definition. The broader area of dark soil by the photographic scale is probably a tree throw-hole (looking SE).



Pl. 4 Cross-section through ditch 105 (looking NW).



Pl. 5 The post-medieval land drain has been inserted into the centre of the sandy clay backfill of ditch 111.

Pl. 6 The dark fill of SW-NE aligned ditch 113, depicted on the 1891 Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 map (looking NE).





Pl. 7 Animal burial in grave lined with lime, close to New Farm.



PI. 8 Panoramic view of area stripped of topsoil in 1999 (see also PI. 9).
Looking SE.



PI. 9 Panoramic view of area stripped of topsoil in 1999 (see also PI. 8).
Looking NE.