

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING  
BRIEF AT THE NORTHERN EXTENSION  
OF DORKET HEAD BRICKWORKS,  
ARNOLD, NOTTINGHAM, 2011**



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BRIEF AT THE NORTHERN EXTENSION  
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**A report for Istock Brick Limited**

*by  
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## SUMMARY

- In June 2011 Trent & Peak Archaeology carried out an archaeological watching brief at the Dorket Head Brickworks near Arnold, Nottinghamshire on behalf of Ibstock Brick Limited. This followed on from an archaeological desk-based assessment in 2002 that studied a then proposed northern extension to existing clay workings being undertaken to the south-east of the junction of Calverton Road and Woodborough Lane in Arnold. An earlier study had considered an extension in the south of the area and a more recent one has examined a proposed eastern extension.
- The 2002 report's study area covered an area of approximately 31 hectares that was to be quarried in stages in due course. The report concluded that although there was scattered evidence for prehistoric and Romano-British activity in the general vicinity, there was no known direct evidence of significant archaeological remains within or adjacent to the study area. However, because the local subsoils above the Mercia Mudstones are variable, the absence of recorded cropmarks or surface finds did not preclude the presence of occupation or currently unknown archaeological features within the study area. The planning authority then required that a scheme of archaeological mitigation be submitted and approved.
- Before the works started, the ground was grassland and the adjacent land is still largely used for grazing sheep. As late as 1791 the stripped area was still showing as part of *Tavill Field*, one of the former open fields of Arnold, with forest at the north end. Lines of former ridges and furrows show on Dowland's pre-Parliamentary Enclosure map of 1783. Enclosure followed shortly after in the general area but the study area stayed open until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century when it was finally divided up into regular fields and the ground probably flattened. The area had changed very little by the time the Dorket Head Brickworks had moved its clay extraction operations to the east of Calverton Road in the 1960s.
- The watching brief was carried out between 21st-29<sup>th</sup> June 2011. A strip of land area approximately 65m x 225m in size was stripped by machine, in the main descending down the south-west side of a dry steep-sided valley. The grassland was stripped in two stages – firstly to remove the topsoil and secondly to remove all subsoil down to the natural. Also checked was an area to the south-east, along the line of the former stream where a depression was excavated for a lagoon.
- The topsoil was generally about 20-30cm in depth and the clay subsoil fairly thin. For the size of site there were surprisingly few artefacts recovered and none of these could be identified as being definitely pre-19<sup>th</sup> century in date. The finds were generally in poor condition and abraded.
- The only archaeological features evident were the former stream that had crossed the area, two former boundaries and possible furrows from arable farming. A number of lines of handmade ceramic field drains were also seen. The results were disappointing from an archaeological perspective but probably not surprising as the sloping ground would not have been favourable for former occupation, although it could still have been of agricultural value in earlier times.

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## **1. Introduction**

This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief that was carried out by Trent & Peak Archaeology (TPA) on behalf of Ibstock Brick Limited. The watching brief was carried out in 2011 at the company's Dorket Head Brickworks near Arnold, Nottinghamshire. It followed on from an archaeological desk-based assessment prepared by Trent & Peak Archaeological Unit (since renamed) in 2002 that studied a then proposed northern extension to existing clay workings being undertaken to the south-east of the junction of Calverton Road and Woodborough Lane in Arnold, Nottinghamshire. This study by Kinsley followed an earlier study of the area to the south (Beswick 1997) and a small evaluation excavation within that area (Gilbert 1997). A more recent study has examined a proposed eastern extension (Brown and Sheppard 2009, reissued 2013). The boundaries of these areas are shown on Figure 1 and the various reports are listed below.

The 2002 report's study area covered an area of approximately 31 hectares, part of which had already been subject to clay stockpiling. It was referred to as the northern extension and most of the area was to be quarried in due course. The report concluded that although there was scattered evidence for prehistoric and Romano-British activity in the general vicinity, there was no known direct evidence of significant archaeological remains within or adjacent to the study area. However, because the local subsoils above the Mercia Mudstones are variable, the absence of recorded cropmarks or surface finds did not preclude the presence of occupation or currently unknown archaeological features within the study area.

Although the report did not recommend any further targeted work the planning authority subsequently imposed the following condition:

*39. Prior to stripping of topsoil in the remaining area of mineral extraction details of a scheme of archaeological mitigation shall be submitted to and approved in writing with the Mineral Planning Authority. The development shall be implemented and carried out in full accordance with the approved details.*

In the light of this condition an archaeological watching brief was recommended during the preparatory topsoil and subsoil stripping that was planned to occur in 2011. A written scheme of investigation (WSI) was prepared as a mitigation proposal, submitted to Nottinghamshire County Council and approved. The WSI stated that the watching brief be carried out in accordance with appropriate professional standards, e.g. the Institute for Archaeologists' (IfA) *Standards & Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (1999).

The overall study has employed the methodology developed by Trent & Peak Archaeology for use on similar projects in the region. This methodology conforms to the standard requirements of planning authorities where consent applications are made for development or quarrying. These follow guidelines to be found in the National Planning Procedure Framework (2012) which replaces conservation planning document *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* (PPS 5, 2010).

The TPA site code is AKL.4.

## **2. Site background**

Before the works started, the ground was grassland and the adjacent land to the east is still largely used for grazing sheep. However, as late as 1791 the stripped area was still showing as part of *Tavill Field*, one of the former open fields of Arnold where arable strip farming was practiced in the Medieval period. The lines of former ridges and furrows are shown on Dowland's pre-Parliamentary Enclosure map of 1783 (Figure 3). Dowland also produced a draft Enclosure map in c.1789 and a final Enclosure map in 1791. The later maps show Killisick Lane laid out to the south of the study area, with all the land to the south of it divided up into new fields. To the north, the west part of the quarry's northern extension (see Figure 1 for its full extent) had also been divided up but the east area, including the stripped area of 2011, was numbered Area 83 and was still open farmland south of the stream, and covered by forest to the north of it. It was owned by John Need Esq.

At some point before 1835 Need's land had also been divided up into rectilinear shaped fields. The stream had been straightened out and what remained of its course ran alongside a new field boundary. The changed landscape can be seen in Figure 4. The area had changed very little by the time the Dorket Head Brickworks had moved its clay extraction operations to the east of Calverton Road in the 1960s.

## **3. Watching brief**

The watching brief was carried out on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> June (by the author) and 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> June 2011 (by Daryl Baxter). A strip of land area estimated at approximately 65m x 225m in size was to be stripped, descending down the south side of a dry steep-sided valley running north-west to south-east, and rising partly up the north slope to where clay had been stockpiled. This crossed the line of the former stream and a former field boundary along the same general alignment. The grassland was to be stripped in two stages – firstly to remove the topsoil and secondly to remove all subsoil down to the natural. The full area was checked after the first stage to look for potential features and any finds scatters showing in the upper subsoil, and rechecked again at the second stage to see if any deep features would show, and once any possibility of any remaining topsoil that may have obscured the top of the subsoil had been removed.

The initial stripping was carried out by machine in three general strips (two long ones running SW-NE and one disjointed one at the north end running NW-SE), with bunds or embankments left between them. Access was along the general line of the former east-west field boundary and adjacent trackway, with the main excavation on the sloping ground to the south of this. The stripped areas were walked over and the piled topsoil forming the bunds was checked for finds. Eventually, the piled-up topsoil was removed and a secondary strip occurred to remove the subsoil and reveal the natural. Also checked was an area to the south-east, along the line of the former stream (Plate 8) where a depression was excavated for a lagoon (Plate 9); no archaeology was evident here.

#### **4. Results**

The topsoil was generally about 20-30cm in depth and the clay subsoil varied, being extremely thin on the upper slopes and deeper towards the base of the slope (Plate 7). As a result, over much of the site the initial strip actually exposed the underlying mudstone and skerry. For a relatively large site there were surprisingly few artefacts recovered and none of these could be identified as being definitely pre-19<sup>th</sup> century in date. During the four visits the finds recovered totalled 36 pottery sherds, 12 clay pipe fragments, two animal bones, 4 bottle glass pieces, 2 flint flakes and 2 asbestos pieces. The finds were generally in poor condition and abraded.

Very few archaeological features were evident on the site and these were only boundaries and possible furrows from arable farming. The main features noted were as follows:

1. Former stream: This was showing as a distinct dark band at the base of the slope. Just up slope from this there was the line of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century field boundary with some stone and brick rubble in its lower fill (Plate 4).
2. East boundary to the long narrow south-west to north-east running pre-Parliamentary enclosure strip no. 555, as shown on Dowland's maps. This showed up 3m in from the western extent of the stripping, showing as a dark band about 1m across (Plate 5).
3. Possible base of furrows showing in the lower slope as alternate bands at the subsoil/natural boundary. These were running down slope and found to be 1.5m – 2m across. A total of 22 were counted across the site. None of them showed during the walkover for the initial assessment. One must conclude that the land had been deliberately levelled and 'improved' at some point after enclosure, thereby removing evidence at ground level for their former existence.
4. Ceramic field drains. A number of very straight lines of field drains were noticed towards to top of the slopes where they were not as deeply set (Plate 6). The drains were hand-made and circular in cross-section with a diameter of about 2¼ inches (57-60mm).

In conclusion, the results were minimal. The sloping nature of the site would not have been favourable for former occupation sites and although the area would have been farmed in the Medieval period (at least south of the stream), no artefactual evidence was found for this earlier use of the land. However, during a watching brief on a site of this nature with the use of heavy machinery only a small percentage of removed topsoil can be checked for finds. At least some evidence for the former farming was noticed where furrows had penetrated the underlying skerry / mudstone natural.



## **List of previous reports**

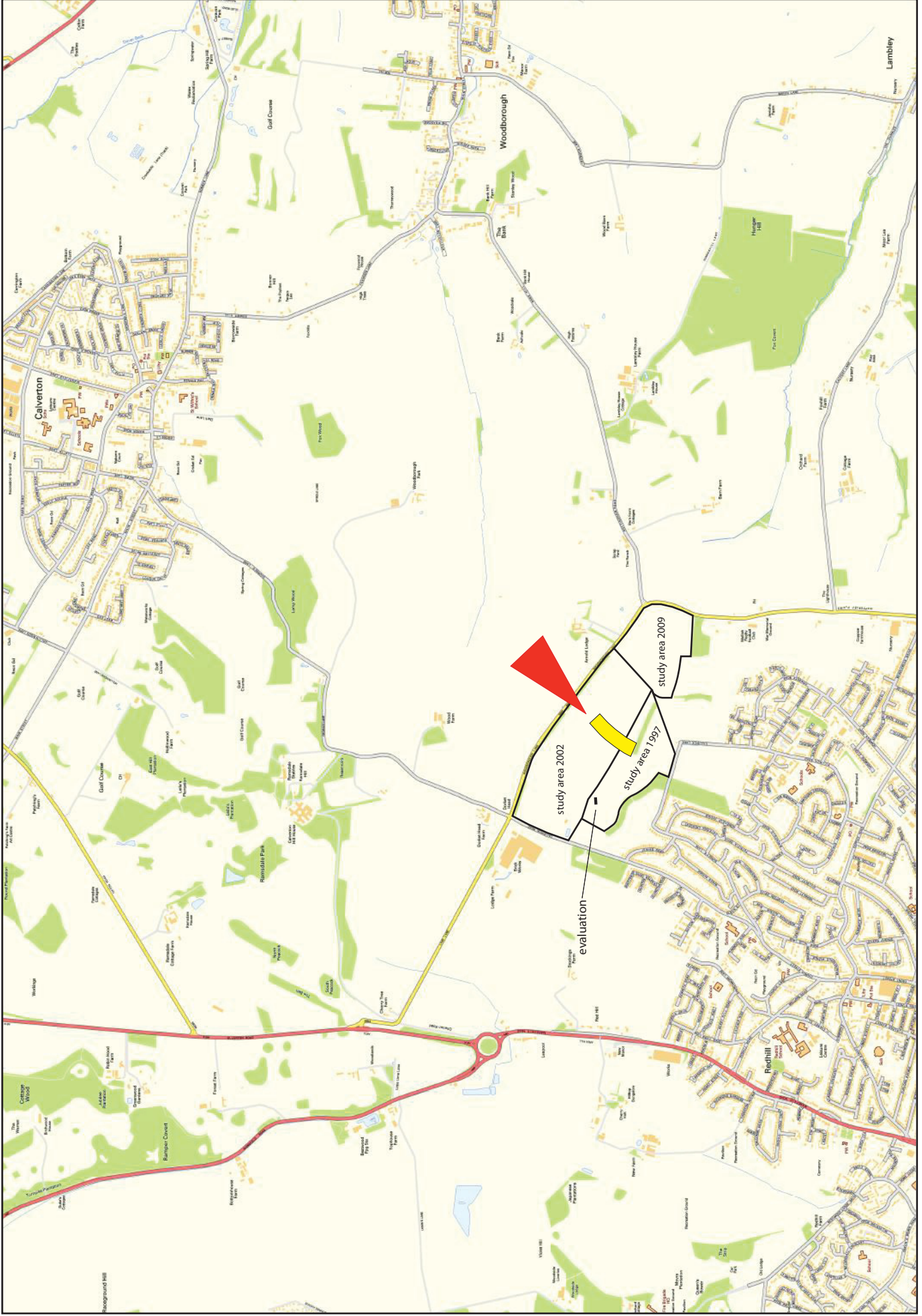
Beswick, P., 1997. 'Dorket Head Quarry Archaeological Assessment.' Unpublished report by Trent & Peak Archaeological Trust for Bowman Planton Associates.

Brown, J. and Sheppard, R., 2009 (reissued 2013). 'An Archaeological Desk-based Assessment of the Proposed Eastern Extension of Dorket Head Brickworks, Arnold, Nottingham.' Unpublished report by Trent & Peak Archaeology for Ibstock Brick Ltd.

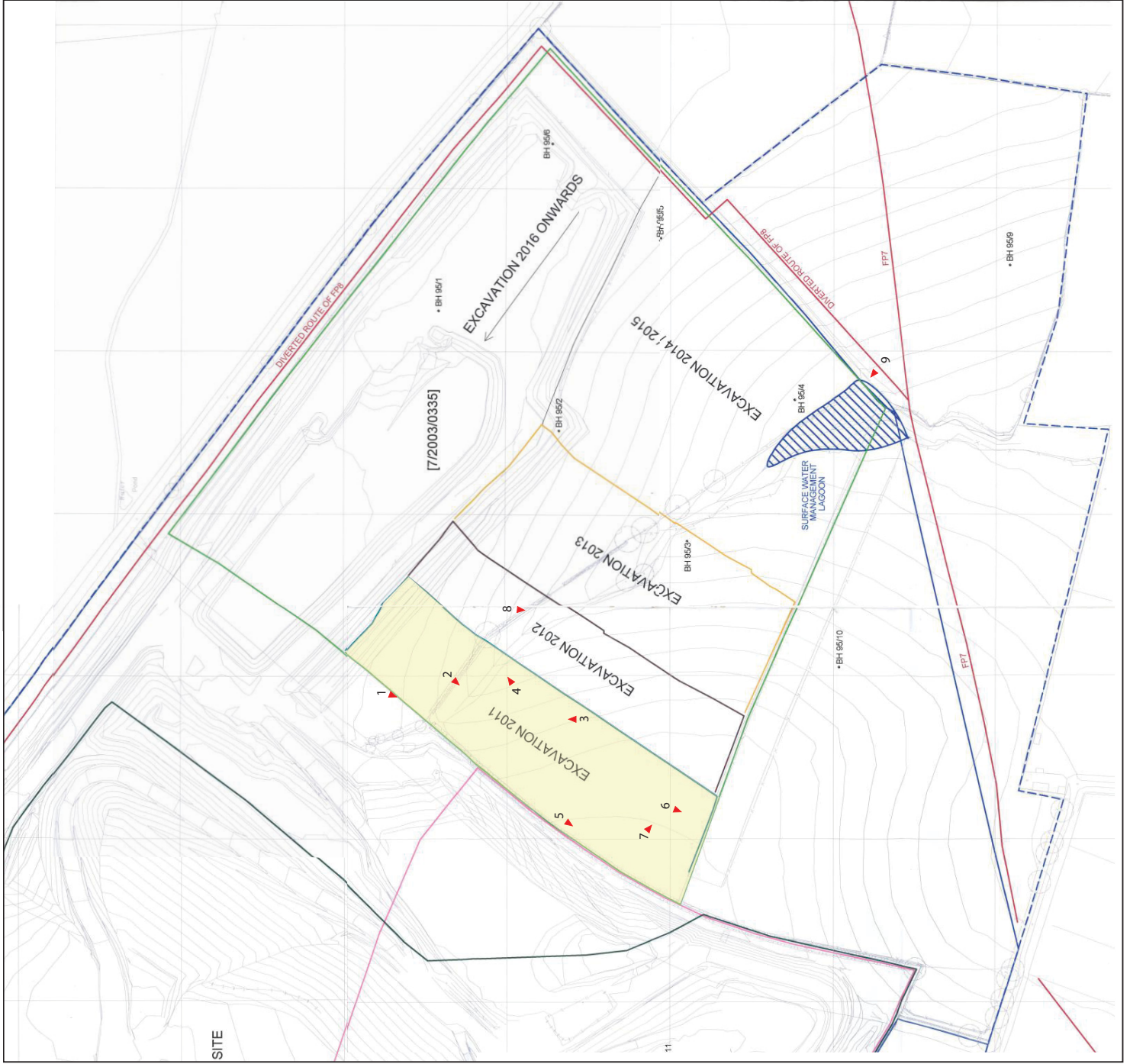
Gilbert, D., 1997. 'Dorket Head Quarry, Arnold, Nottinghamshire. A report on the Archaeological Evaluation.' Unpublished report by Trent & Peak Archaeological Trust for Ibstock Brick Ltd.

Kinsley, G., 2002. 'An Archaeological desk-top assessment of Dorket Head Quarry, Notts. (Northern Extension).' Unpublished report by Trent & Peak Archaeological Unit for Ibstock Brick Ltd.

# **ILLUSTRATIONS**



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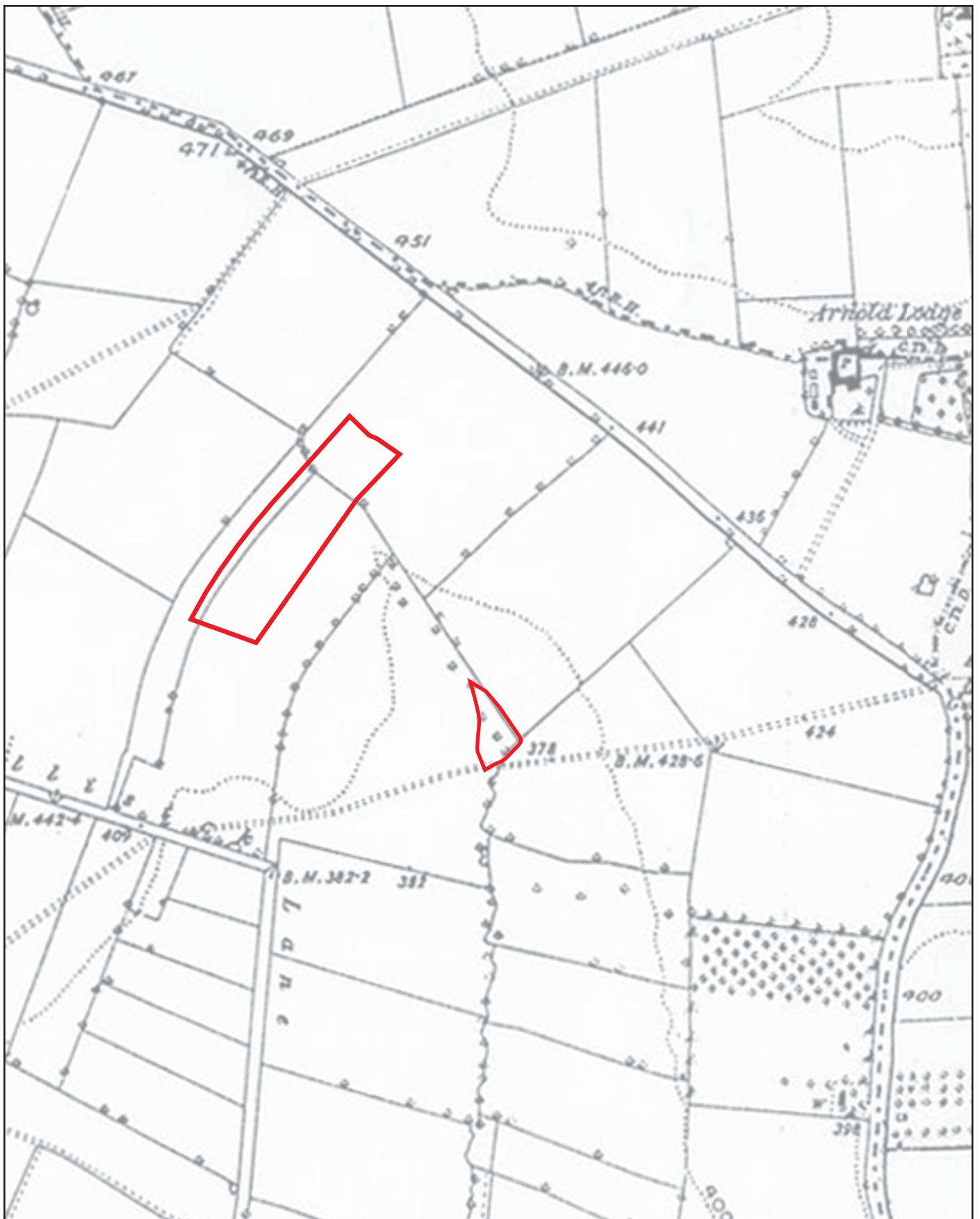


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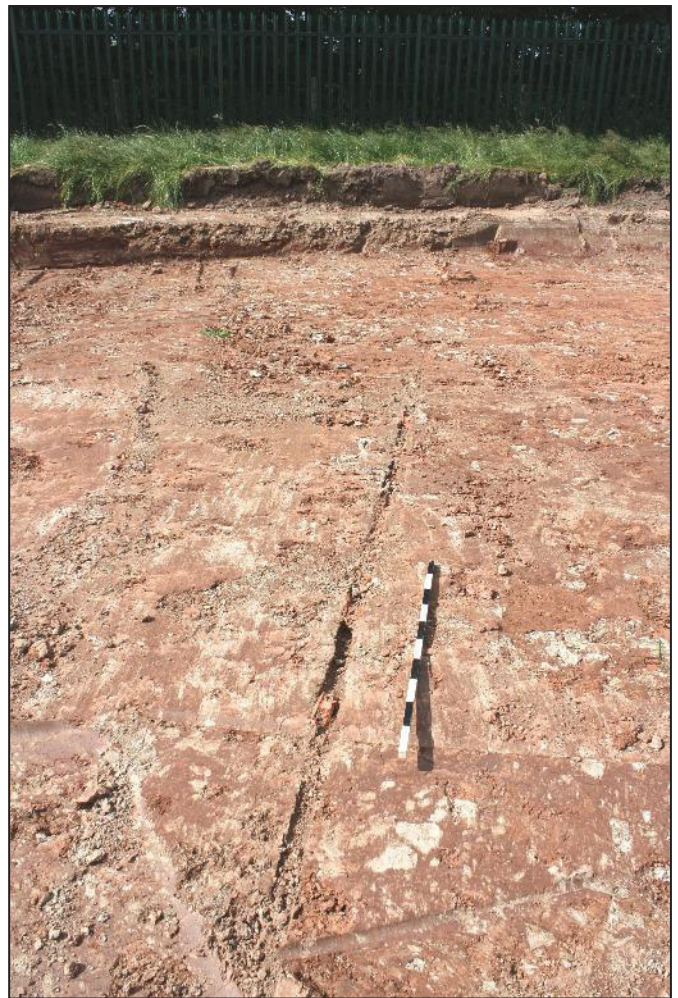




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