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RIPON CITY QUARRY

RIPON

NORTH YORKSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

REPORT
DECEMBER 2005

EXCAVATION AND EVALUATION SECTION



ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
RIPON CITY QUARRY
RIPON
NORTH YORKSHIRE

SITE CODE: RCQ 03-04
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REPORT
December 2005



FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY SPECIALISTS LTD

Unit A3 Parkside Centre
Terry Avenue
York YO23 1JP

TELEPHONE (01904) 652000
FACSIMILE (01904) 656222
E-MAIL arch18@york.ac.uk

ON BEHALF OF

KILVERS

Minerals and Waste Management Planning Consultancy

Little Kilvers

Exelby

Bedale

North Yorkshire

DL8 2HF

CLIENT

BROWN AND POTTER LTD

Ripon City Quarry

Boroughbridge Road

Ripon

North Yorkshire

HG4 1UG

PROJECT TEAM

Richard Jackson BA

Malin Holst BA MSc

REPORT PREPARED BY

Richard Jackson BA

REPORT REVIEWED BY

Cecily Spall BSc MA

REPORT AUTHORISED BY

Justin Garner-Lahire BA

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Summary

A watching brief was undertaken by Field Archaeology Specialists (FAS) at Ripon City Quarry, Ripon, North Yorkshire (NGR 3330 8950). The work was undertaken on behalf of Kilvers Minerals and Waste Management Planning Consultancy for Brown and Potter Ltd and consisted of the archaeological monitoring of topsoil and overburden removal in advance of mineral extraction.

The investigation recorded a modern ploughsoil overlying 20th century overburden, which extended across the site. This deposit varied in depth and became deeper towards the River Ure; it is thought to be a product of continual floodplain soil deposition. No archaeological remains earlier than the late 19th century were identified during investigation.

Acknowledgements

Field Archaeology Specialists would like to thank Mr David Brown of Brown and Potter Ltd and Mr Steve Machin of Kilvers for their assistance during the project.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document reports on an archaeological watching brief undertaken by Field Archaeology Specialists (FAS) on land forming an extension to the south of Ripon City Quarry, Ripon, North Yorkshire. The work was undertaken on behalf of Kilvers Minerals and Waste Management Planning Consultancy for Brown and Potter Ltd and consisted of the archaeological monitoring of topsoil stripping and overburden removal in advance of mineral extraction. Fieldwork took place in two sessions: between the 9th of September and the 3rd of October 2003 and the 10th and 14th of May 2004.

1.1 LOCATION AND LAND USE

The site is situated to the southeast of Ripon, adjacent to Ripon Racecourse, and forms a southern extension to the existing Ripon City Quarry (NGR 3330 8950; Figure 1). It comprised a parcel of land bounded immediately to the north by the open workings of the quarry, to the east by the River Ure, and to the south and west by open fields with Ripon Canal beyond. Prior to work commencing the site had been under cultivation.

1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The watching brief aimed to observe and monitor the removal of topsoil and overburden in order to define, excavate, record and characterise any archaeological remains exposed within the area of investigation. Since no archaeological condition had been placed on this phase of extraction, the watching brief was carried out at the request of the client to ensure that the archaeological impact of quarrying would be minimised. The watching brief was undertaken in accordance with the Standard Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for Limited Archaeological Recording (Watching Brief) prepared by the North Yorkshire County Council Heritage Unit.

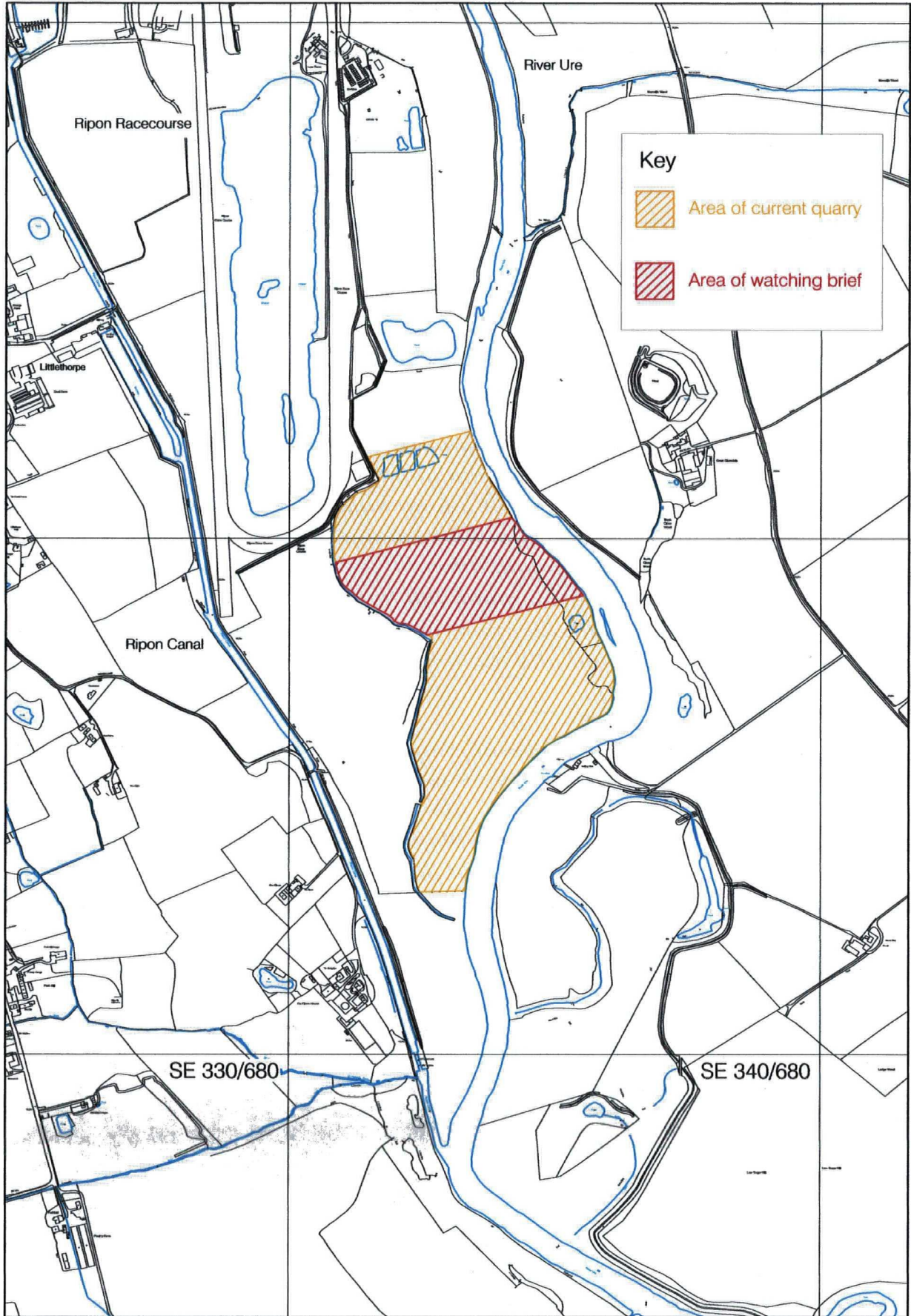
1.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The area of investigation is situated in the Ure Valley and as such lies within a broad and varied archaeological landscape. The site of Ripon City Quarry has not been the subject of previous archaeological investigation, although fluvial gravels being extracted have been the subject of study by members of Durham University as part of the Swale-Ure Washlands project. This research has shown that the river gravels under extraction have been deposited periodically over the last 3000 years representing ancient courses of the River Ure, and that river gravels were being deposited in the extraction area until as late as the 17th century.


During the course of mineral extraction at Ripon City Quarry there have been a small number of waterlogged leather finds recovered from the fluvial terraces. These include an unidentified leather object, possibly a quiver (Plate 1), and shoes tentatively dated to the 14th



Plate 1 Possible quiver from quarry



Key

-  Area of current quarry
-  Area of watching brief

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Location of watching brief

Scale 1:10000



Figure 1

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century. These items may have been dumped in the River Ure at Ripon and redeposited by river action downstream.

2.0 FIELDWORK PROCEDURE

Fieldwork consisted of two phases of monitoring of topsoil and overburden removal. Work was carried out using a tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a broad toothless bucket. The exposed surface was monitored for archaeological remains and any anomalies were cleaned in plan and tested by hand-excavation.

3.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS

The site was covered with a layer of dark brown sandy silt ploughsoil, allocated C1000, which varied in depth between 0.30m and 0.60m. Ploughsoil overlay a number of modern features encountered infrequently across the current area of investigation, which included brick and rubble hardcore for a vehicle access, a series of east-west aligned ploughmarks, a modern horse burial, and several spreads of ash and charcoal, which were identified as the location of bonfires. Two old field boundaries were also observed in the form of linear features with varying widths of between 0.30m and 0.50m. Segments of these features were hand-excavated to test their form, character and date, which revealed them to contain backfills of dark greyish-brown sandy silt, reminiscent of ploughsoil. The excavated segments measured depths of only 0.20m with undulating bases and were identified as old hedgelines.

These modern features overlay or cut an homogenous, clean and sterile deposit of yellowish-brown sandy silt overburden (C1001), which extended across the entire site. Towards the western boundary of the site the deposit had a slight clay content and appeared mottled, with evidence for mineralisation or iron panning; to the east the deposit became finer in composition and deepened approaching the River Ure, following a natural slope towards the river. Several hand- and machine-excavated test pits indicated that the overburden sealed fluvial gravels and varied in depth between 0.30m and 3.00m. It would appear that C1001 represented alluvium within the flood-plain of the River Ure and sealed a dump of late 19th or early 20th century domestic debris, dating the overburden to 20th century flooding episodes.

The dump of late 19th to early 20th century material, allocated C1002, was encountered towards the eastern edge of the current area of investigation, along the line of the River Ure, 2.0m below present ground level. A sondage was excavated by hand through these deposits to illustrate the nature of the formation process of alluvial deposits (Plate 2). The dump of material appears to have been deposited on a former ground surface or riverbank, overlying numerous thin lenses of river washed sands and silts and then sealed by the deeper layer of overburden.



Plate 2 Section of sondage through modern alluvium

4.0 DISCUSSION

The results of the watching brief have shown that the entire site is covered with an overburden of alluvial silt. Only modern features cut this layer, which in turn seals a late 19th to early 20th century dump of domestic waste. Underlying this dump, a sequence of undulating river silts and gravels were encountered.

The proximity of the site to the River Ure and the nature of the deposits recorded during the watching brief suggest that the area would have been marginal land within the flood plain and that the use of the land for cultivation is only a relatively recent event. Consequently, the potential to encounter *in situ* archaeological deposits related to settlement, for example, would appear to be limited.

The recovery of medieval artefacts during a previous phase of extraction indicates that the main potential for the survival of archaeological deposits on the site lies within the river gravels themselves. These have captured incidental objects which were either deliberately placed in the river or lost to flooding. While useful as dating evidence for accumulating river gravels, any further archaeological value is dependent on the nature, date and significance of individual objects.



FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY SPECIALISTS LTD

UNIT A3
PARKSIDE CENTRE
TERRY AVENUE
YORK YO23 1JP

TELEPHONE
FASCIMILE
E-MAIL

(01904) 652000
(01904) 656222
arch18@york.ac.uk