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Surface Collection

by
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Introduction

The following report details the results of archaeological fieldwork at Catholme, Staffordshire (centered on NGR SK 700 800). The fieldwork was undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology during August 1999 and was commissioned by Phoenix Consulting on behalf of Hanson, Catholme Quarry. The work consisted of systematic fieldwalking and surface collection of artefacts from the ploughsoil.

Background

The site consists of approximately 20 hectares of fields lying some 7km south-west of Burton-on-Trent, and *ca.* 330m east of the modern A38 (fig. 1). The subsoil comprises mixed sands and gravels forming a flat river terrace of the River Trent. The main line railway bounds the site to east and Catholme Lane bounds the site to the south. At the time of fieldwork, 80% of the land had been ploughed but was not disc harrowed, as this is not the usual agricultural practice upon the sand and gravel river terrace in the area. Some 20% of the site was unavailable for surface collection due to crop rotation practices and the presence of the stubble and ground cover of previous crops. The weather conditions were relatively favourable, with dry, periodically sunny weather. The ploughed surface was allowed to weather. The western limits of the surface collection areas were noticeably wetter under foot.

Cropmarks indicate the presence of a probable henge (SMR 1397), defined by five concentric rings of post-holes arranged in a radiate pattern, within the eastern limits of the surface collection area (Jones 1992). Immediately to the west of this monument lies a second putative radiate henge (SMR 203), formed by a circular enclosure with a radiating pattern of pits, bounded to the north by a broad curviform feature, possibly forming part of an enclosing ditch. Both these monuments have been scheduled and were demarcated by Hanson surveyors and were not included in the surface collection survey. Two roughly parallel pit alignments (SMR 1478 and 1479), aligned east-west, appear to respect the position of the henges, and probably post-date the latter sites. Two small cropmark enclosures have been located to the north of the northern pit alignment and fall within the surface collection boundaries.

Objective

The objective of the surface collection was to provide information to help determine the nature, extent, character and date of any potential archaeological features present on the site and to act as a tool in determining the possible location of evaluation trenches.

Methodology

Initially, 100m² grids were laid out using a Sokkia Set 3 Total Station, and surveyed into the national grid. These were then divided into 20m intervals. Surface collection was carried out along 20m transects and 20m stints. Post-medieval artefacts were not collected, but their presence was noted. All other finds categories were collected.

Field boundaries were sent in a digitised format and ArcView was used to annotate the base map. No prominent land undulations were observed. Finds data was processed and inputted into ArcView. Density plots were then produced displaying quantities of finds for each category for the 20m survey intervals. These quantifications are depicted by different symbols for different categories of find (fig 2).

The finds were quantified by occurrence only (Table 1) and sorted into the following groups: flint (flakes and cores), medieval pottery, animal bones and iron nails.

Find type	Quantity
Animal bone	3
Flint flake	1
Flint core	1
Iron nail	2
Medieval pottery	1

Table 1: Summary of finds recovered by surface collection

Results

Table 1 shows the quantifications of finds recovered and the distribution plot of the finds categories is presented in Figure 2. The results are described below.

The flint (fig 2) - A total of two items of humanly-struck flint was recovered, comprising a single small flake core and a struck flake, neither of which are closely datable.

The medieval pottery (fig 2) - A single sherd of medieval pottery of 12th/13th century date was recovered. This could probably be attributed to manuring scatters.

Other finds - All the other remaining finds recovered could be of post-medieval date and include 3 fragments of animal bone and two iron nails.

The finds and archive are currently stored at Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit, prior to arrangements being made for deposition with the appropriate museum.

Discussion

The results from the surface collection, although poor, compare favourably with the results of similar fieldwork at the nearby site of Whitemoor Haye, Staffs. Given that

the cropmark evidence suggests a primarily ritual landscape rather than a settlement landscape, it is not surprising that little material culture evidence has survived in the ploughsoil.

Acknowledgments

The fieldwork was carried out by Annette Hancocks, Erica Macey, Simon Holyoak and Georgina Holt. The surveying was undertaken by Gary Coates and John Hovey. Lucie Dingwall and Sally Exon carried the ArcView work. The identifications of the finds were made by Annette Hancocks, with flint identification by Lynne Bevan. Figure 1 was prepared by Gary Coates and the report was edited by Simon Buteux. Thanks are due to Dr Andrew Richmond of Phoenix Consulting and Roy Bishop, the quarry manager.

Reference

Jones, A. E. 1992 *Catholme, Staffordshire: An Archaeological Evaluation*. BUFAU Report No. 209

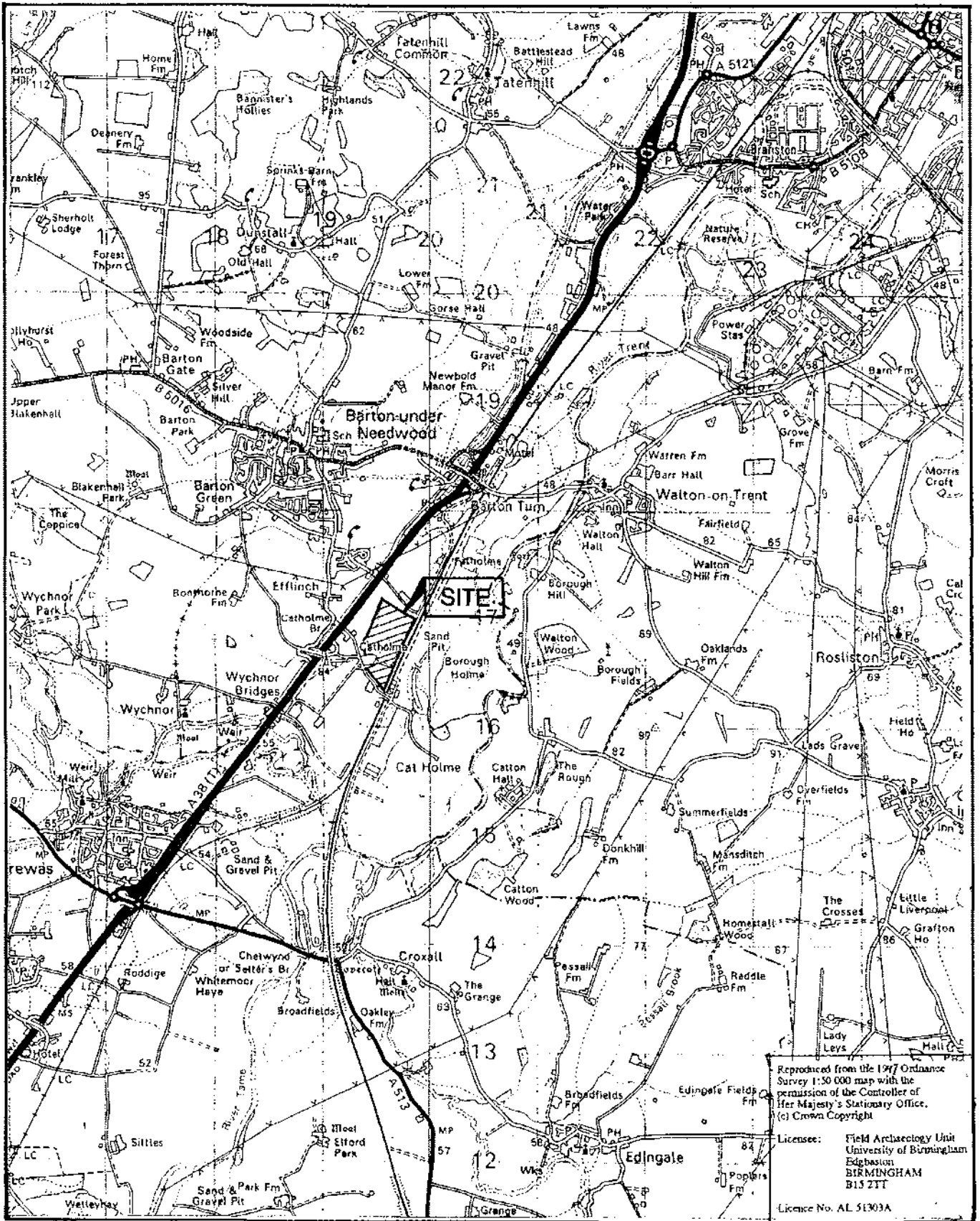









Figure 1.

Fig. 2 Catholme Fieldwalking



-  Under Crop (stubble) - cannot be walked
-  Study Area
-  Medieval Pottery
-  Flint - Small Struck Core
-  Flint - Struck flake
-  Iron Nail
-  Animal Bone

