

Hints Quarry, Tamworth,
Staffordshire

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF 2009**

Project No. 1988

Hints Quarry, Tamworth, Staffordshire

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

By
Dave McNicol
Project Officer

	Name	Position
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Approved by:		
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for

**Tarmac Plc
Millfields Road
Ettingshall
Wolverhampton
West Midlands
WV4 6JP**

Birmingham Archaeology

The University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT
tel: +44 (0)121 414 5513, fax: +44 (0)121 414 5516, email: bham-arch@bham.ac.uk
www.barch.bham.ac.uk/

Hints Quarry, Tamworth, Staffordshire
Archaeological Watching Brief 2009

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Hints Quarry, Tamworth, Staffordshire

Archaeological Watching Brief 2009

SUMMARY

Birmingham Archaeology was commissioned by Tarmac Plc, to undertake an archaeological watching brief in respect of quarry activity at Hints Quarry, Tamworth, Staffordshire (centred on NGR SK 1650 0400). The site work was undertaken between 5th and 9th October 2009. The work was carried out in fulfilment of a planning condition imposed by Staffordshire County Council. The watching brief took place during the stripping of topsoil in advance of quarrying. No archaeological features, structures or deposits were identified during the course of the watching brief.

A series of watching briefs has been undertaken at the quarry since 2005. Features of Bronze Age, Iron Age and Romano-British date have been identified during preceding phases of work at the quarry. Of particular interest was a single cremation associated with Late Bronze Age pottery.

Hints Quarry, Tamworth, Staffordshire

Archaeological Watching Brief 2009

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Birmingham Archaeology was commissioned by Tarmac Plc to undertake an archaeological watching brief during quarrying at Hints Quarry, Tamworth, Staffordshire (Fig. 1, centred on NGR SK 165/040). The work was carried out as a requirement of planning permission imposed by Staffordshire County Council.
- 1.2 This report outlines the results of the watching brief carried out between the 5th and 9th October 2009. The fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (Birmingham Archaeology 2009, reproduced as Appendix 1) which was approved by the County Archaeological Officer, Staffordshire County Council prior to implementation, in accordance with guidelines laid down in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (DoE 1990). The project conformed to the Institute for Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs (IfA 2008).

2 LOCATION AND GEOLOGY

- 2.1 Hints Quarry is located to the north of the village of Hints, which lies to the west of Tamworth (centred on NGR. SK 41600 30460). The watching brief area lies at the north of the quarry, off Know Grave Lane (Fig. 1).
- 2.2 The solid geology of the area consists of Hopwas Breccia at Hints Hill, Mercia Mudstone to the east and Kidderminster and Bromsgrove sandstones to the west. The drift geology is sands and gravels.
- 2.3 The site lies on the crest of a hill which slopes gently to the south, with Bucks Head Farm to the northwest. Prior to extraction, the site was given over to arable cultivation.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In 2005 Birmingham Archaeology carried out an archaeological watching brief at the quarry. Several small pits were identified containing burnt stone and pottery. A single Middle Bronze Age cremation was also recorded. Several field boundaries were identified but contained no datable finds (Krawiec *et al.* forthcoming).
- 3.2 In 2008, a watching brief carried out by Birmingham Archaeology uncovered further Middle Bronze Age pits containing sherds of pottery, with one of the pits contained burnt bone, possibly indicative of another cremation.
- 3.3 The discovery of both domestic and mortuary features may indicate the presence of a nearby and as yet undiscovered settlement, although the density of features on site was admittedly very low. It is also possible that this cremation represents a single event and the pits may be related to feasting rituals prior to or during funerary rites. Barrows and flat cremation cemeteries are well documented in Staffordshire, especially along the Trent Valley.

4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 4.1 The principal aim of the watching brief was monitor all elements of the topsoil strip likely to affect below-ground remains, and to record any archaeological features, structures, deposits, or horizons exposed during the works.

5 METHODOLOGY (PLATES 1-2)

- 5.1 The watching brief was carried out during the topsoil strip and mechanical excavation associated with quarrying within the existing Hints quarry, operated by Tarmac Plc. The machine used for the purpose of topsoil stripping was a bulldozer.
- 5.2 The watching brief involved:
- Archaeological monitoring during the removal of soil and overburden
 - Inspection of the subsoil for archaeological features
 - Rapid cleaning and hand-testing of any features/ possible features identified
 - Archaeological monitoring during the machine excavation of subsoils
 - Examination of spoil heaps for archaeological finds
- 5.3 All stratigraphic sequences were recorded, even where no archaeology was present. Written records and plans were to be supplemented by plans (1:50 or 1:20) and sections (1:10 or 1:20), as well as by photographs using black and white monochrome, colour slide and digital photography.
- 5.4 The site archive will be prepared according to guidelines set down in Appendix 3 of the Management of Archaeology Projects (English Heritage, 1991), the Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-term Storage (UKIC, 1990) and Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological collections (Museum and Art Galleries Commission, 1992). The paper archive will be deposited with the appropriate repository subject to permission from the landowner.

6 RESULTS

- 6.1 The natural subsoil was an orange-red silt-sand (1000).
- 6.2 The topsoil comprised dark brown clay-silt (1001).
- 6.3 No features, or possible features were revealed by the watching brief and no finds of archaeological interest were collected.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Previous archaeological watching briefs at the quarry have revealed a few scattered features, mainly comprising small pits. No such features were revealed during the 2009 fieldwork. It is possible that the area investigated in 2009 contained no archaeological features. Another possibility to be considered is that any archaeological features, of whatever date present, could not be defined because the surface produced by machining in 2009 was not suitable for the definition of small archaeological features.

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 8.1 The project was commissioned by Tarmac Plc. Thanks are due to Simon Parkes for his co-operation and assistance throughout the project. Thanks also go to Stephen Dean, Planning Archaeologist for Staffordshire County Council who monitored the project on behalf of Staffordshire County Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Erica Macey-Bracken. The report was prepared by Dave McNicol and illustrated by Nigel Dodds. The report was edited by Alex Jones who also managed the project for Birmingham Archaeology.

9 REFERENCES

- Birmingham Archaeology 2009 *Hints Quarry, Tamoworth, Staffordshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*
- Department of the Environment (DoE) 1990 *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning*.
- English Heritage 1991 *The Management of Archaeological Projects*. English Heritage: London.
- Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) 2008 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief*. Institute of Field Archaeologists.
- Krawiec, K, Edwards, E, and Brickley, M, forthcoming A Middle Bronze Age Cremation and Other Prehistoric Features at Hints Quarry, Staffordshire, *Transactions of the Staffordshire Archaeological Society*.
- Museums and Art Galleries Commission 1992 *Standards in the museum care of archaeological collections*. London: Museums and Galleries Commission.
- UKIC (Walker K.) 1990 *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage*. Archaeology Section of the United Kingdom Institute for Conservation.

Appendix 1: Written Scheme of Investigation

WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Hints Quarry, Hints, Staffordshire 2009

1.0: PLANNING BACKGROUND

This document outlines the programme of work required to undertake a watching brief at the above site. It forms a written scheme of investigation required as part of the planning permission granted by Staffordshire CC. Any variation in the scope of work would be agreed with the Planning Archaeologist, Staffordshire CC, before implementation.

2.0: LOCATION

Hints Quarry is located to the north of the village of Hints, which lies to the west of Tamworth. The solid geology of the area consists of Hopwas Breccia at Hints Hill, Mercia Mudstone to the east and Kidderminster and Bromsgrove sandstones to the west. The drift geology is sands and gravels. The site lies on the crest of a hill which slopes gently to the south, with Bucks Head Farm to the northeast. Prior to extraction it was given over to arable cultivation.

3.0: ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site has been subject to a desk-based assessment which revealed no significant archaeological potential for the preservation of archaeological remains. During October 2006 an archaeological watching brief was carried out at Hints Quarry, Staffordshire. Several small pits were identified containing burnt stone and pottery. A single Middle Bronze Age cremation was also recorded. Several field boundaries were identified but contained no datable finds.

Subsequent fieldwork in 2008 uncovered an unurned cremation pit of Middle Bronze Age date, together with other pits of Bronze Age-Iron Age date in the near vicinity.

The discovery of both domestic and mortuary features may indicate the presence of a nearby and as yet undiscovered settlement. It is also possible that this cremation represents a single event and the pits may be related to feasting rituals prior to or during funerary rites. Barrows and flat cremation cemeteries are well documented in Staffordshire, especially along the Trent Valley.

4.0: SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

The work will be carried out during the topsoil strip and mechanical excavation associated with quarrying within the existing Hints quarry, operated by Tarmac Ltd.

5.0: STAFFING

The fieldwork will be managed for Birmingham Archaeology by a BA Project Manager and the supervisor undertaking the watching brief will be an appropriately experienced BA supervisor.

Specialist staff:

Jane Timby, Roman pottery
Dr Ann Woodward, prehistoric pottery
Stephanie Ratkai, post-Roman pottery
Environmental archaeology, Dr Ben Gearey

A: AIMS

The general aim of the watching brief is to monitor all elements of the topsoil strip likely to affect below-ground remains, and to identify and record any features of archaeological, or possible archaeological interest.

B: METHODOLOGY

The archaeological watching brief will involve:

- 1) archaeological monitoring during the removal of soil and overburden.
- 2) Inspection of the subsoil for archaeological features.
- 3) Rapid cleaning and hand-testing of any features/possible features identified.
- 4) Archaeological monitoring during the machine excavation of subsoils.
- 5) Examination of spoil heaps for archaeological finds.
- 6) Preparation of an illustrated report describing the results of the fieldwork.

These aims will be achieved through archaeological observation during the removal of overburden (see plan for locations).

Should significant and unexpected finds be made, the area surrounding such remains will be left undisturbed pending discussions with the Planning Archaeologist, Staffordshire CC as to the resources required for their proper investigation.

Any items of suspected treasure will be reported to the appropriate authority in accordance with the Treasure Act 1996.

Human remains

No excavation of human remains would be undertaken until a Home Office Licence was obtained, and the Planning Archaeologist, the local Coroner, the Police, the Archaeological Consultant (if any) consulted.

Recording

Recording would be by means of pre-printed pro-formas for contexts and features, supplemented by plans (1:20 and 1:50 as appropriate) and sections (1:10 and 1:20 as appropriate), and 35mm monochrome print and colour slide photography.

Finds

Finds would be recovered by context would be washed, marked and bagged. Appropriate conservation work would be undertaken. A metal detector would be used as an aid to finds recovery.

Environmental sampling

All datable features would be sampled objectively for the recovery of charred or waterlogged plant remains, pollen and insect remains.

Access to the site may be required by the Staffordshire CC Planning Archaeologist for the purpose of monitoring the archaeological watching brief and its results. In the event that significant, or potentially significant finds/features of archaeological interest are identified the Staffordshire CC Planning Archaeologist would be consulted to decide if further, more intensive archaeological investigation is required.

C: REPORT FORMAT

The archaeological watching brief report will comprise:

- Description of the development and archaeological background
- Details of the archaeological results, set within their context.
- Spot-dating of datable finds, and brief finds and environmental reports
- A discussion of the watching brief results.
- Plans showing the locations and extent of the development site subjected to the watching brief, supported by historic map extracts to place the watching brief results in the wider context.
- Simplified feature plans and sections, where applicable.
- A selection of colour photographs, where applicable.

The report will be copied to the quarry operator, the County Council, and the NMR.

The written report will be made publicly accessible, as part of the West Midlands Sites and Monuments Record within six months of completion. A summary report will be submitted for inclusion in *West Midlands Archaeology*.

Additionally, the Staffordshire CC Activity and Source Submission form will be completed.

The site archive will be prepared according to the guidelines set down in Appendix 3 of the *Management of Archaeology Projects* (English Heritage) and the Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long Term Storage (UKIC, 1990), and Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections (Museums and Galleries Commission, 1992).

D: PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

- Birmingham Archaeology is a Registered Archaeological Organisation (RAO) with the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA)
- All Birmingham Archaeology staff will follow the Code of Conduct of the IFA at all times.
- The watching brief will be undertaken in accordance with the standards laid down in the 'Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs' (1999)
- The archaeological watching brief will follow the specific guidelines and requirements laid down in the Design Brief prepared by the relevant Planning Archaeologist, and the particular requirements set down in this document, which will be followed by all project staff. All variations will be agreed in advance with the relevant Planning Archaeologist and Archaeological Consultant (as appropriate).

E: HEALTH AND SAFETY

- A Risk Assessment will be undertaken before commencement of the archaeological watching brief.
- Birmingham Archaeology staff will follow the Health and safety guidelines contained in the Birmingham Archaeology Health and Safety Manual. This follows the requirements of the

SCAUM Health and Safety Manual, and is approved by the Health and Safety Unit of the University of Birmingham.

F: PROGRAMME

The watching brief programme will follow that of the general contractor undertaking construction groundworks, with regular liaison between Birmingham Archaeology and the general contractor to ensure that regular archaeological attendance is maintained during the groundworks sufficient to ensure that the requirements of the Design Brief are fulfilled.

A suitable time allowance for hand-cleaning and recording of archaeological features and deposits should be made by the developer and their construction groundworkers. The archaeologist undertaking the watching brief will maintain regular liaison with the site manager/foreman to keep disruption of the construction programme to a minimum.

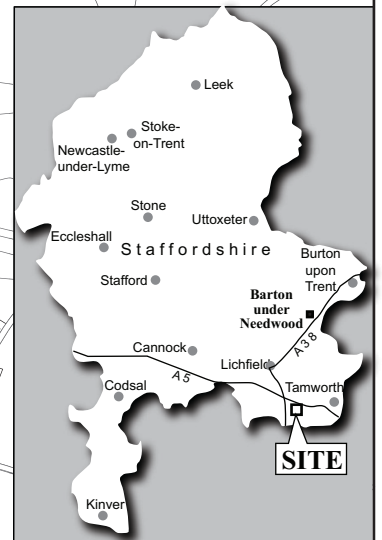
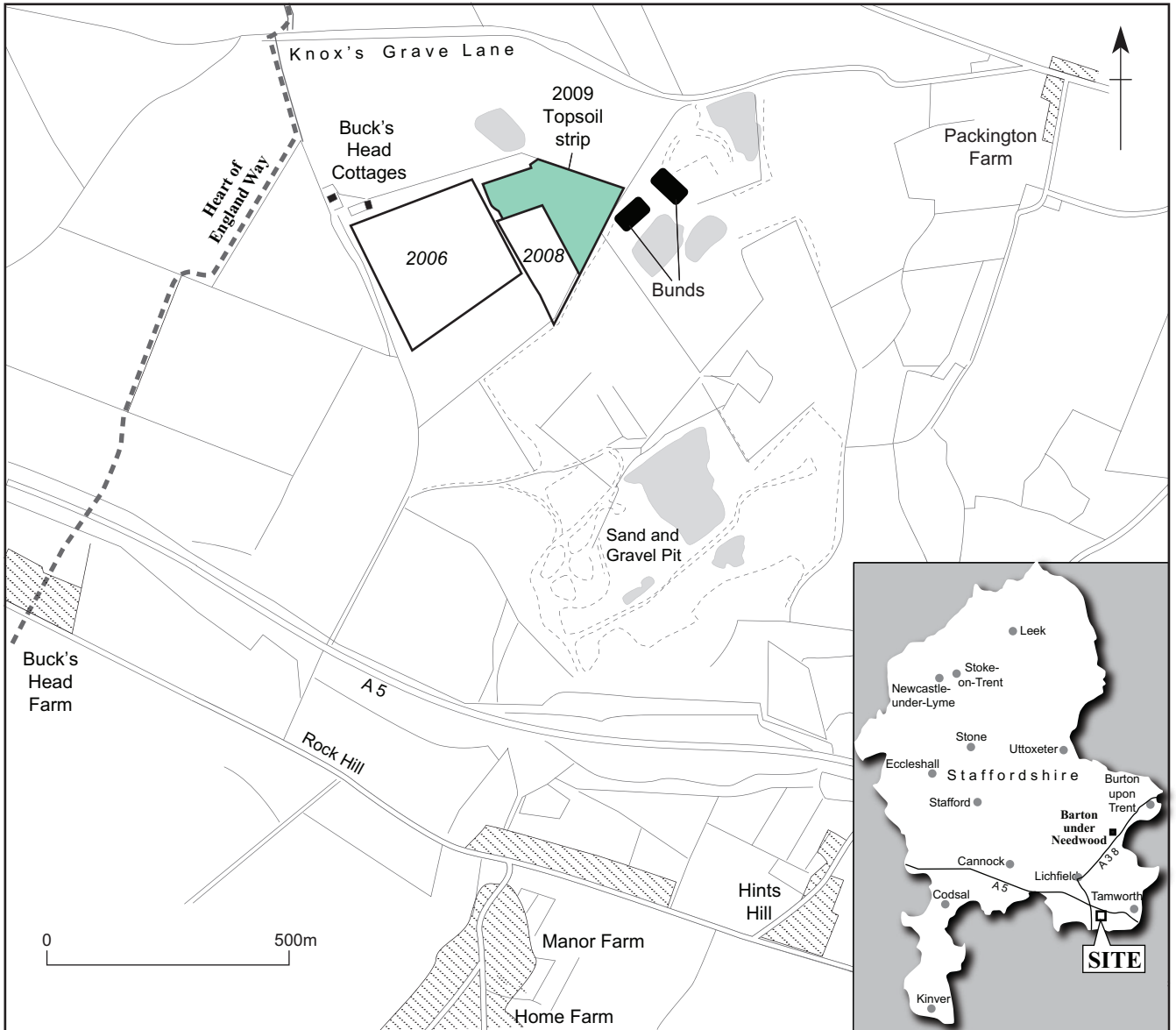




Plate 1



Plate 2