



**Archaeological
Research
Services Ltd**

Results of an Archaeological Watching Brief at Cloddach Quarry, Elgin, Scotland: Phase D



View across the stripped area at Phase D, Cloddach Quarry

ARS Ltd Report 2012/20
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Executive Summary

Archaeological Research Services Ltd was commissioned by Tarmac Ltd to undertake a third phase of archaeological watching brief as part of a quarry extension at Cloddach Quarry, Elgin.

A desk-based assessment, undertaken by Entec UK Ltd (Johns 2002), has shown that significant historic environment remains survive within the vicinity of the proposed extraction area. These comprise cropmark evidence of a possible palisaded enclosure, a trapezoidal-shaped settlement and a square enclosure to the north of the development area. A number of other significant heritage sites have also been identified within the wider landscape, including a carved Pictish stone approximately 500m to the south of the development.

Previous watching briefs undertaken by Archaeological Research Services Ltd (Johnson 2010 and Scott 2011) on the first phase of topsoil stripping within the new area of extraction at the quarry (Area A and B) revealed no significant archaeological remains. It did, however, reveal two heavily truncated archaeological features, that were possible postholes as well as the undisturbed presence of 19th century agricultural field drains on part of the site.

Phase D identified further evidence for drainage as well as a pit thought to represent an earlier phase of quarrying albeit at a much smaller scale.

1. Introduction

1.1 An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Archaeological Research Services Ltd on behalf Tarmac Ltd on the third phase (Area D) of a quarry extension scheme at Cloddach Quarry near Elgin in Moray. The extension of the quarry was proposed to take place in four phases, A-D. This report deals with archaeological monitoring of groundwork in phase D only (Fig 2 and 3).

2. Location

2.1 Cloddach Quarry (NGR centre point NJ2005 5921) is located in Moray, in north-east Scotland, to the immediate west of Elgin. The quarry is located next to the River Lossie, which runs to the east and north of the site, and occupies flat or gently sloping ground, most of which is the former floodplain of the river.

2.2 The solid geology of the area comprises Pebbly Sandstones from the Alves Beds formations across most of the site although the south-east corner of the extension area is underlain by Pebbly Sandstone from the Kingsteps sandstone formation with a fault line, running north-east to south-west, separating the two. The bedrock geology is overlain by glacio-fluvial ice-contact deposits comprised of gravels, sands and silts which have the potential to contain peat-filled ice-wastage features such as kettle holes which may contain palaeoenvironmental information, as well as being areas that are attractive to past human activity from the prehistoric periods onwards.

2.3 The whole proposed extension area is mostly arable and pasture fields at present, covering an area of 28ha, delimited on the north side by Mayne Farm and Mayne Wood and Paddockhaugh at its southern edge. Area D is the southern most area within the planned quarry.

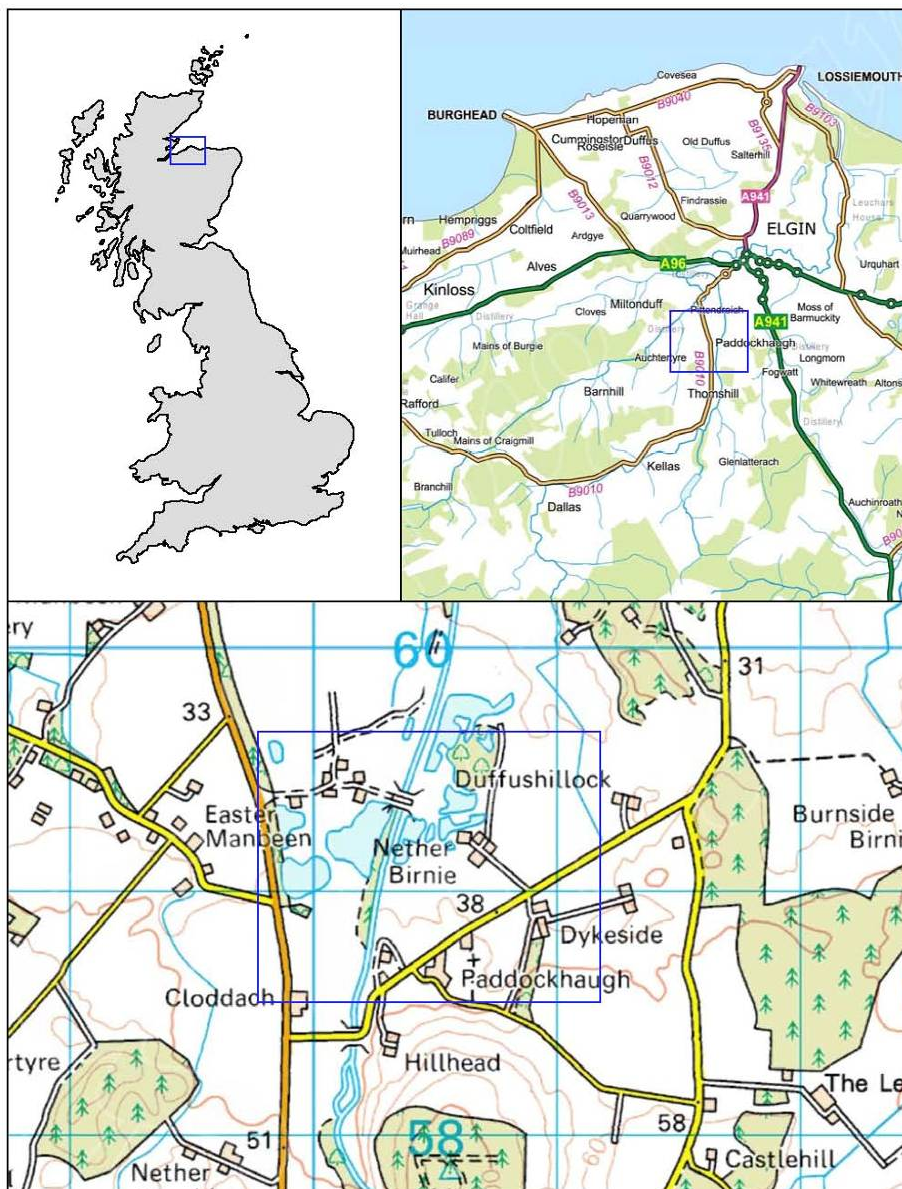


Figure 1 Location map of Cloddach Quarry
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3. Aims of the Project

3.1 The aim of the watching brief was to observe all ground works to investigate the possible presence of any surviving archaeological remains. Any archaeological remains observed would be subject to full record and excavation to allow preservation by record.

4. Method Statement

4.1 The excavation was undertaken with a 360 degree excavator utilising a toothless ditching bucket. The entire process was monitored by an archaeologist from Archaeological Research Services Ltd. Each of the features identified during the stripping process was subject to excavation and recording. This involved the sectioning of deposits to determine their form and dimensions. All excavation was undertaken with trowels and small tools. The content of all deposits were sieved through a 10mm mesh. All features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film, and selective digital photographs were taken. All sections were drawn at 1:10, features planned at 1:20 and larger site plans were recorded at 1:500. The section lines were surveyed to provide an Ordnance Survey datum for each feature.

4.2 All the deposits and cuts were described in the field on pro-forma context sheets. The sheets contain prompts for the recording of sediment composition, compaction and colour, the dimensions of the deposit, its relationship to other deposits and features, artefact content, environmental samples, drawing and photographic records and an interpretative discussion to ensure consistency across all records. All features were described in accordance with MoLAS conventions. Drawings were produced on drawing film and on graph paper on the reverse side of the context sheets. Registers of all contexts, samples, finds, levels, and drawings were also made.

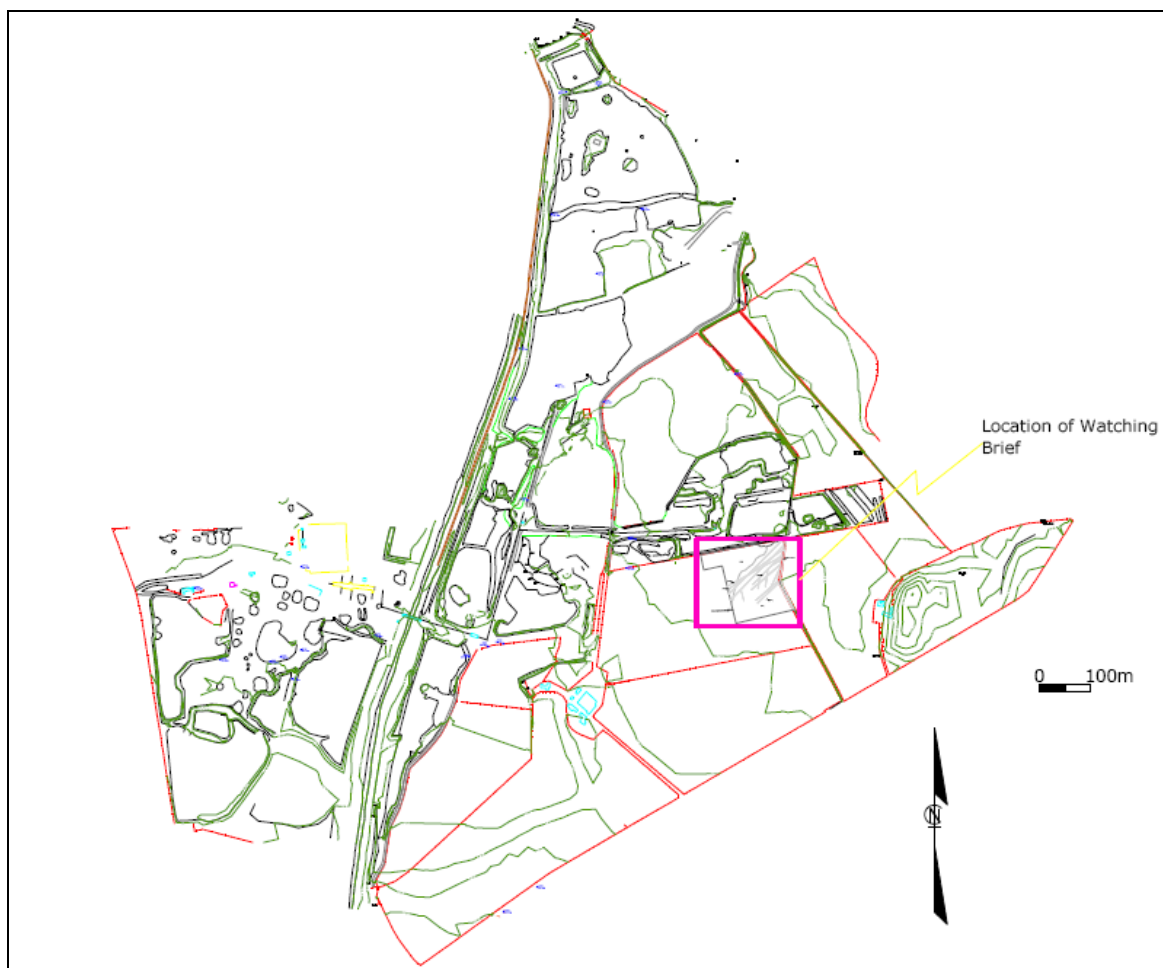


Fig. 2: Outline of quarry with location of the watching brief on area D

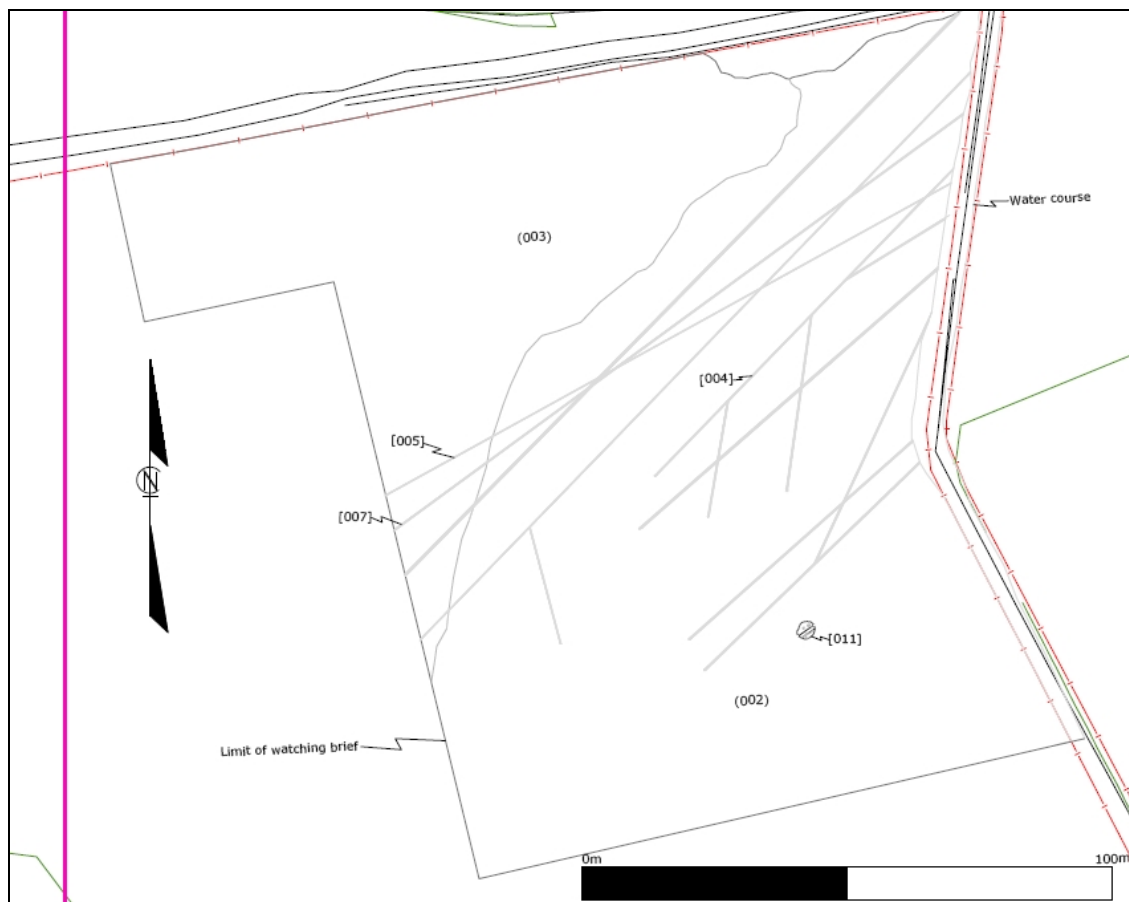


Fig 3: Plan of watching brief area with drains and pit [011] included

5. Watching Brief Results

5.1 No archaeological features survived within the topsoil, only those features that were cut into the natural glaciofluvial gravel deposits remained.

Topsoil. The topsoil (001) consisted of a dark-brown sandy silty soil containing coarse to medium gravel inclusions and was loosely compacted.

Glaciofluvial Deposits. A mixed deposit of coarse gravel and coarse sand (002) was evident across most of the area. The north western part of area D displayed very coarse orange and light grey gravel (003).

5.2 As many as thirteen land drains were revealed during the programme of monitoring. An exact number is difficult to ascertain due to the presence of very short subsidiary drains which were badly damaged and were only partially represented. Three of the drains were excavated to confirm that they were indeed drainage features. The remaining narrow linear features which were not excavated are believed to be drains based on the morphological similarities of the confirmed drain cuts and similar orientations. Both cuts [004] and [007] contained ceramic examples whilst [005] contained a square wooden drain. The fills were consistently found to be dark spongy *Sphagnum* peat. These features suggest that area D was drained, most likely in the 19th or 20th century, to create a dryer field better suited to modern agricultural use.

5.3 A single pit, [011], was identified towards the southern extent of Area D. The feature was recognisable due to a ring of loose dark brown sandy silt, (013), which surrounded approximately half of the pit. During the excavation of the pit, a single shard of modern glass and a small piece of modern brown glazed pottery was discovered in context (012), the fill which accounted for the majority of the feature. Based on the assumed modern date for the feature, excavation was abandoned at 0.6m. The size and location of the pit suggest that it was perhaps an earlier extraction pit.



Figure 4. Modern ceramic field drain within Area D



Figure 5. Modern wooden field drain within area D



Figure 6. Exploratory trench through pit [011]

6. Conclusions

6.1 There appears to be a preference to drain the softer sandier glacio-fluvial deposit to the south rather than the free draining coarse gravel to the north east of the study area.

6.2 The single archaeological feature, [011], presents evidence for a low level of quarrying which was on-going prior to the more recent large scale quarrying. This single example may be the result of a local farm performing small scale quarrying to acquire gravel for a small building project or ground consolidation.

6.3 The discovery of the pit does indicate a reasonable level of preservation on the gravels. Continuous monitoring of the Cloddach quarry may therefore reveal further preserved archaeological remains.

7. Publicity, Confidentiality and Copyright

7.1 Any Publicity will be handled by the client.

7.2 Digital and paper copies of the project archive will be deposited with OASIS.

7.3 Archaeological Research Services will retain the copyright of all documentary and photographic material under the Copyright, Designs and Patent Act, 1988.

8. Statement of Indemnity

8.1 All statements and opinions contained within this report arising from the works undertaken are offered in good faith and compiled according to professional standards. No responsibility can be accepted by the author/s of the report for any errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by any third party, or for loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in any such report(s), howsoever such facts and opinions may have been derived.

9. Acknowledgements

9.1 Archaeological Research Services Ltd would like to thank Niall Blair and Ronnie Towns from Tarmac Ltd for their assistance during the fieldwork.

10. References

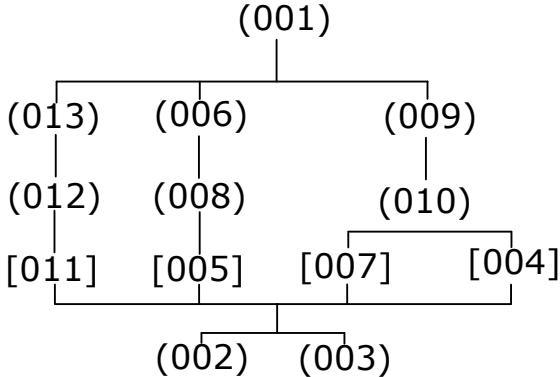
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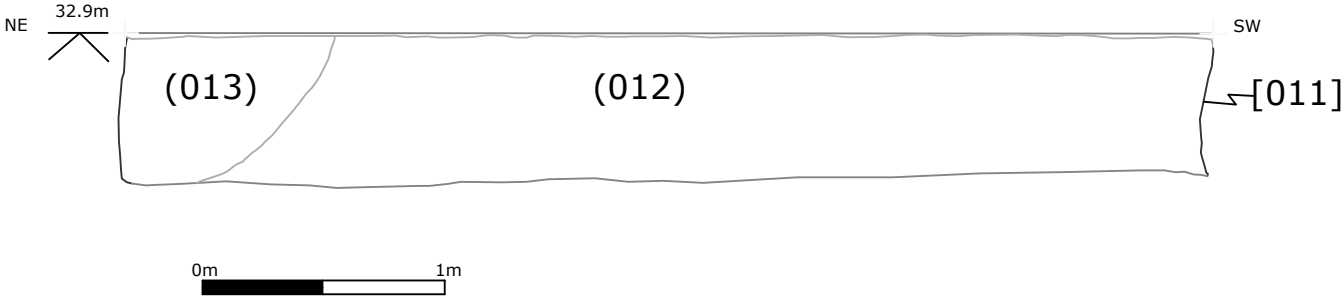
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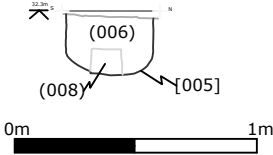
Appendix 1



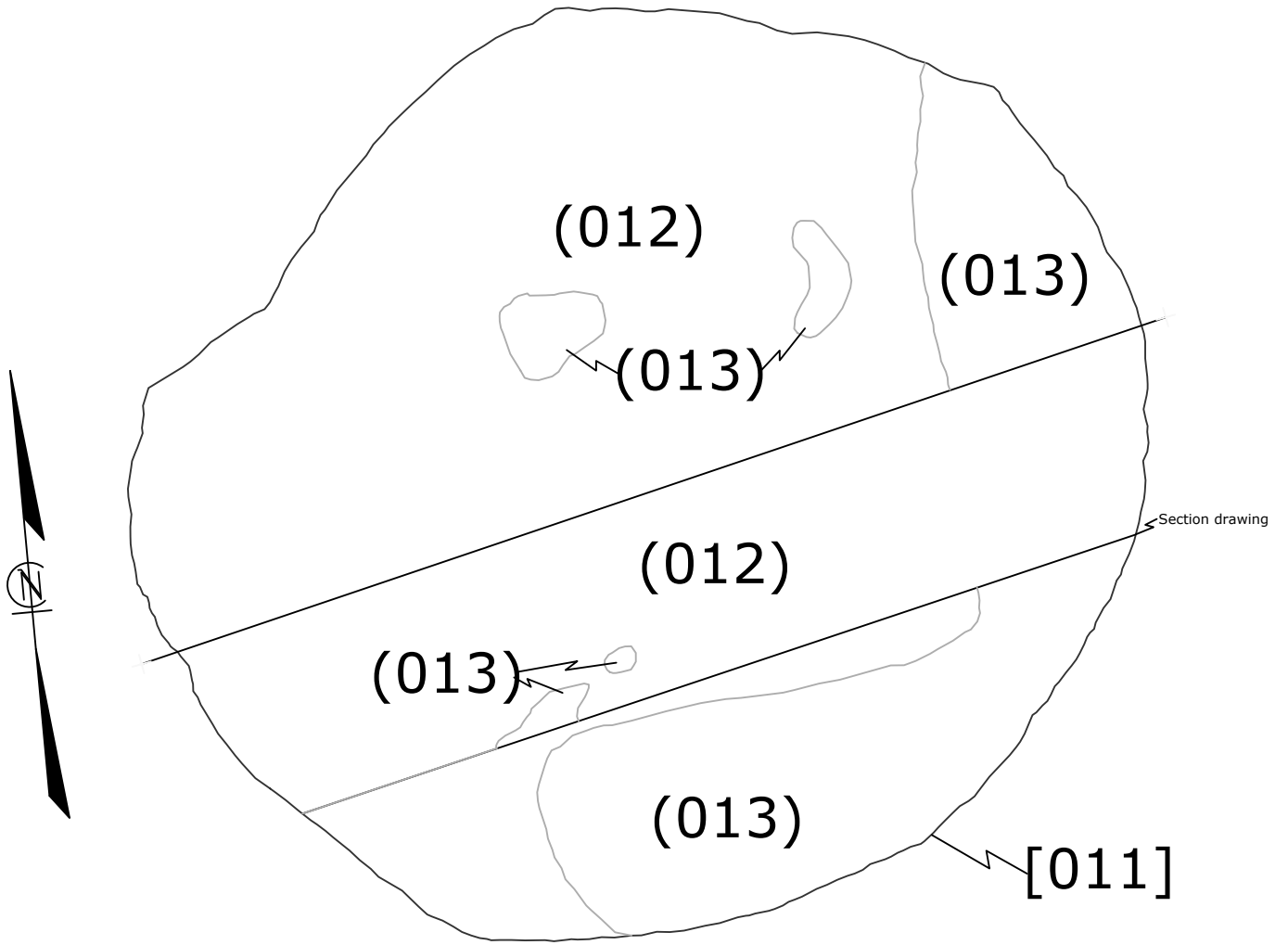
Stratigraphic matrix



Section drawing through pit [011]



Section drawing through drain [005]



Plan of pit [011]