

An Archaeological Watching Brief at Cloddach Quarry, Elgin, Scotland Phase E



View across the stripped area at Phase E, Cloddach Quarry

ARS Ltd Report 2012/64
September 2012

OASIS ID: archaeo15-122224

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

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Executive Summary

In September 2012 Archaeological Research Services Ltd were commissioned by Tarmac Ltd to undertake a fourth 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 in 2010 and 2011 on the first phase of topsoil stripping within the new area of extraction at the quarry (Areas 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. Work on 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.

The final phase of watching brief (Area E) undertaken in September 2012 revealed no archaeological features or deposits.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Archaeological Research Services Ltd on behalf Tarmac Ltd on the fourth phase (Area E) 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 E only (Figure 2).

1.2 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 E is the southernmost and last area within the planned quarry.

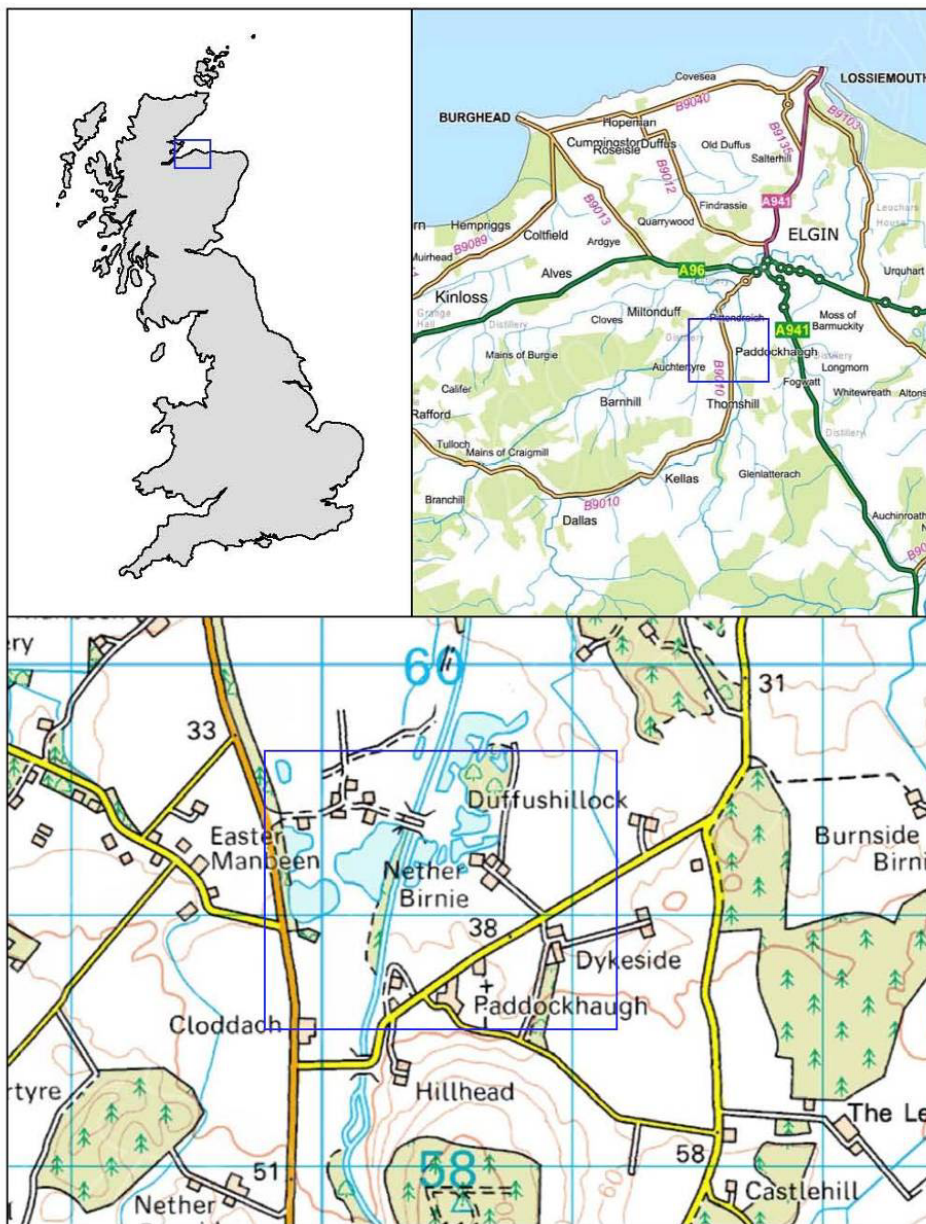


Figure 1. Location map of Cloddach Quarry Ordnance Survey data copyright OS, reproduced by permission, Licence no. 100045420

2. LOCATION

2.1 Cloddach Quarry (NGR centre point NJ 2005 5921) is located in Moray, in north-east Scotland, to the immediate south 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.

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 sites 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.

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.

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

5.3 *Glaciofluvial Deposits.* A mixed deposit of coarse gravel and coarse sand (002) was evident across most of the area. The south eastern part of area E displayed very fine yellow-orange sand (003). To the south western part of the site, gravel and sand was very intermixed with patches of peat with integrated patches of grey silts.

5.2 The watching brief, conducted between the 3rd and 5th of September 2012 to an area roughly 80m EW by 90m NS, revealed no archaeological features or deposits. Due to shallow topsoil (on average only 200mm deep) plough scaring was evident to most parts of the area stripped, as the site lies in an improved agricultural field. To the south western corner of the area were found patches of dark spongy *Sphagnum* peat with fragments of unburnt wood, suggesting that the area had formerly been of gorse/scrub woodland before it was cleared to an improved field, most likely in the 19th or 20th century, to be better suited to the rigours of modern agriculture.

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 No archaeological deposits, features or finds were found during the watching brief and as a result no further archaeological work is required.

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 Copy of results will be submitted to Archaeology Scotland's publication *Discovery & Excavation in Scotland*.

7.4 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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Figure 2:

A plan of the quarry site showing the location of the Watching Brief that monitored Phase E:

Scale = 1:10000 at A4

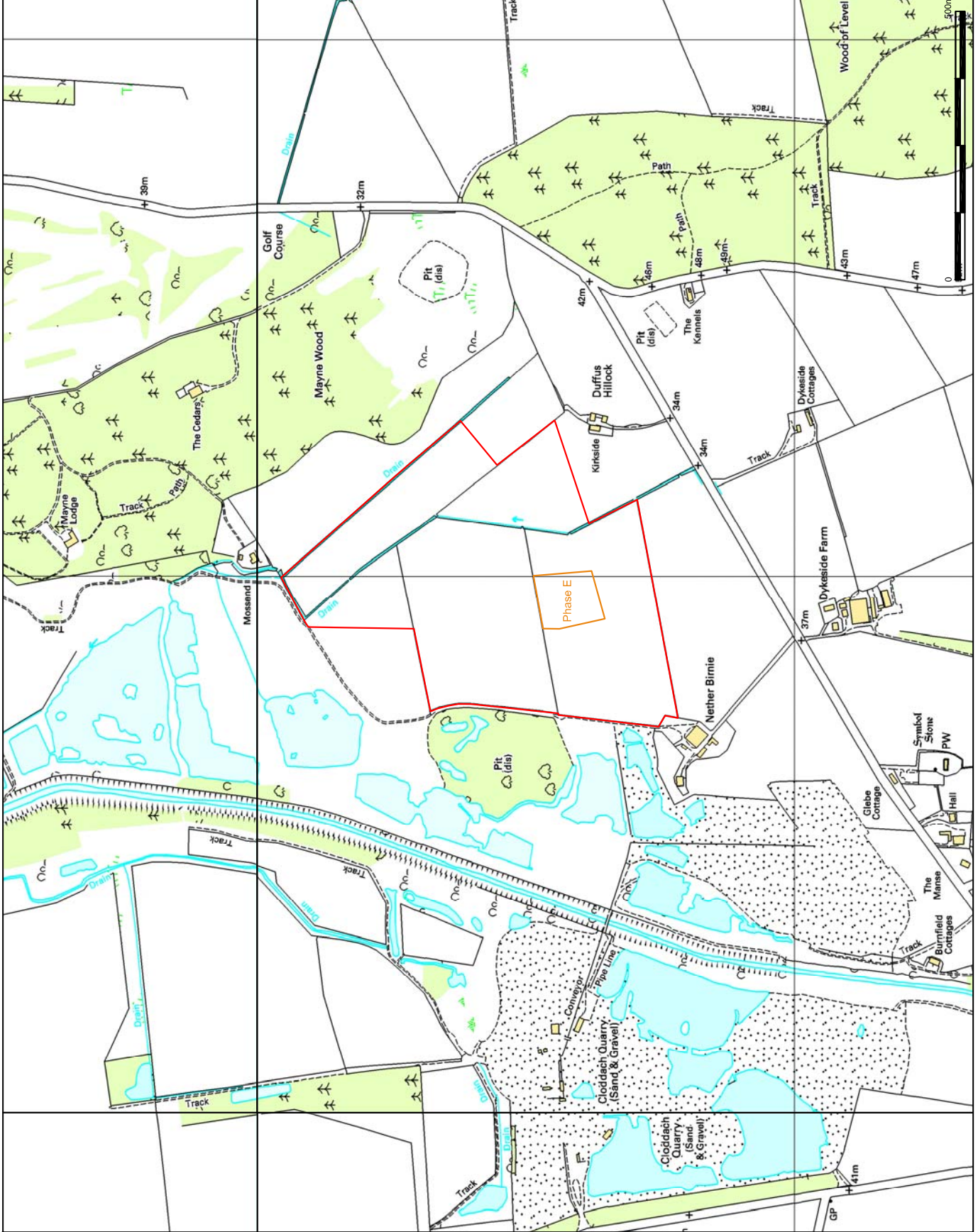
Key:



Site boundary



Phase E



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Figure 3: View of strip in progress, looking northwest across the site.



Figure 4: Strip in progress, looking east across the site.



Figure 5: Strip in progress, looking west across the site.