



**Archaeological
Research
Services Ltd**

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



View across the stripped area at Cloddach Quarry

ARS Ltd Report 2009/70
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Executive Summary

Archaeological Research Services Ltd were commissioned by Tarmac Ltd to undertake an 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.

A watching brief was undertaken on a topsoil strip within the new area of extraction at the quarry and revealed no significant archaeological remains. It did reveal two heavily truncated archaeological features, that were possible postholes associated with a modern field boundary, although given the truncation of these features this is not a definite interpretation. No other finds or features were revealed during the course of the watching brief. However, given the presence of the two truncated features it is possible that other archaeological features, possibly associated with the enclosures mentioned above, may survive elsewhere on the site.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Archaeological Research Services Ltd on behalf Tarmac Ltd on 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 A only (Fig 2).

2. Location

- 2.1 Cloddach Quarry (NGR centrepnt 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 A is central within the extension area and is 2.3ha in extent.

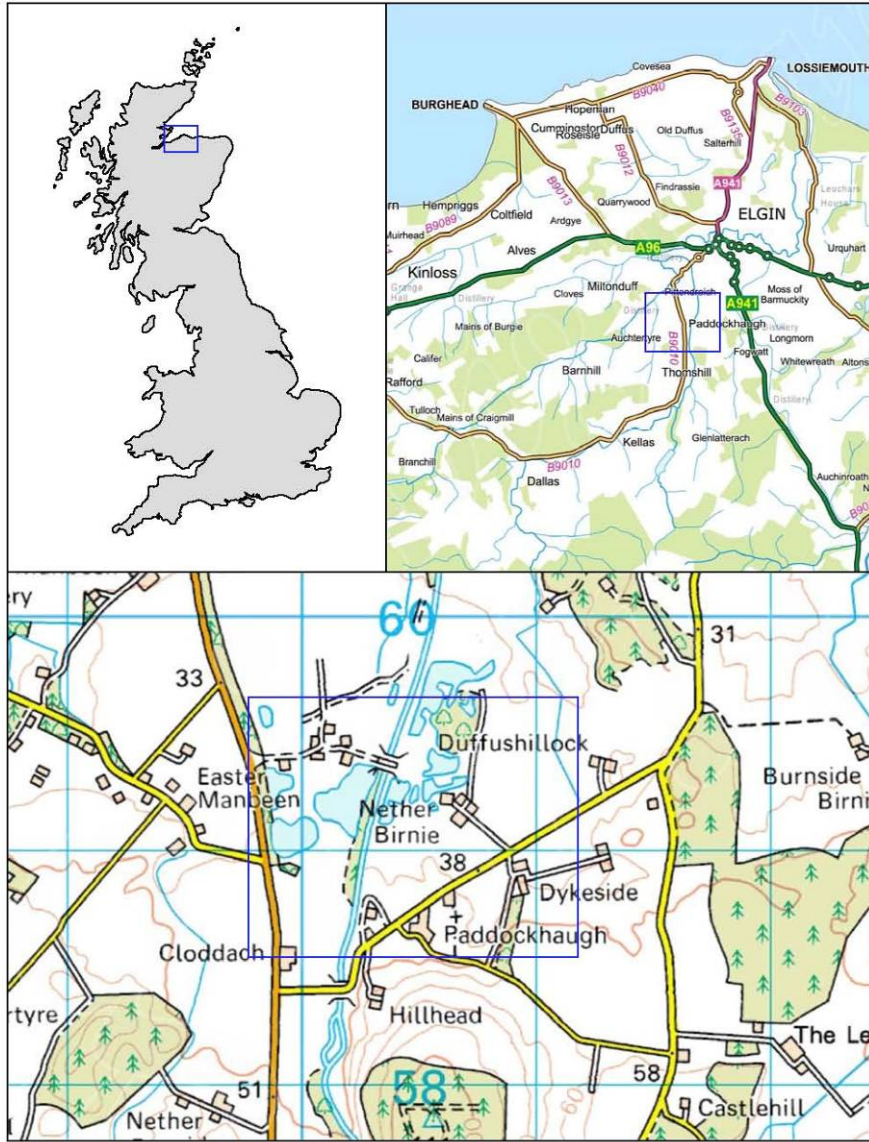


Figure 1 Location map of Cloddach Quarry
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3. Aims of the Project

- 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 and features planned at 1:20. 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.

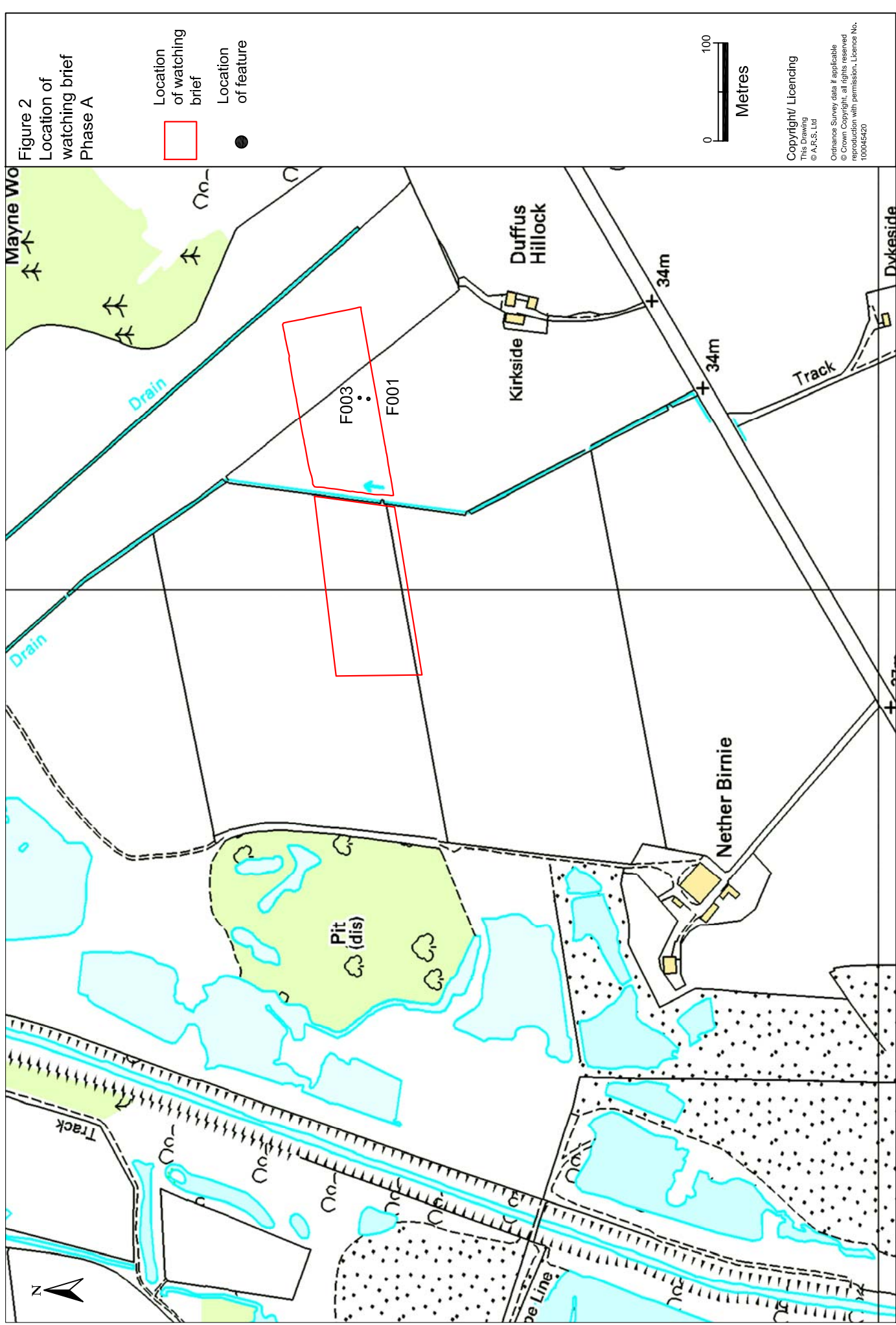


Figure 2
Location of
watching brief
Phase A

Location
of watching
brief
 Location
of feature

0 100
 Metres

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5. Watching Brief Results

5.1 All features on the site were truncated as a result of past agricultural practices. No archaeological features survived within the topsoil, only those features that were cut into the natural glaciofluvial gravel deposits remained.

Topsoil. The topsoil (005) consisted of a dark-brown sandy soil containing coarse to medium gravel inclusions and was loosely compacted.

Glaciofluvial Deposits. A mixed deposit of coarse gravel and coarse sand (006) was evident across the area, interspersed by bands of finer sand.

5.2 The watching brief revealed no archaeological features other than two heavily truncated probable postholes [F001] and [F003] (Figs. 3, 4 and 5). These contained a very loose, poorly sorted silty-sand fill and produced no material culture or charred material. They are thought to relate to modern activity, possibly associated with a former field boundary.

Feature No.	Context Numbers	Description	Max. dimensions (mm)	Max. Depth (mm)	Colour of Fill	Composition
F001	001, 002	Possible posthole	200 x 160	30	Mid brown 7.5YR3/4	Silty Sand
F003	003, 004	Possible posthole	260 x 220	50	Mid brown 7.5YR3/4	Silty Sand

Table 1. Features at Cloddach Quarry



Figure 3. Possible Posthole [001] within area A



Figure 4. Possible Posthole [003] within area A

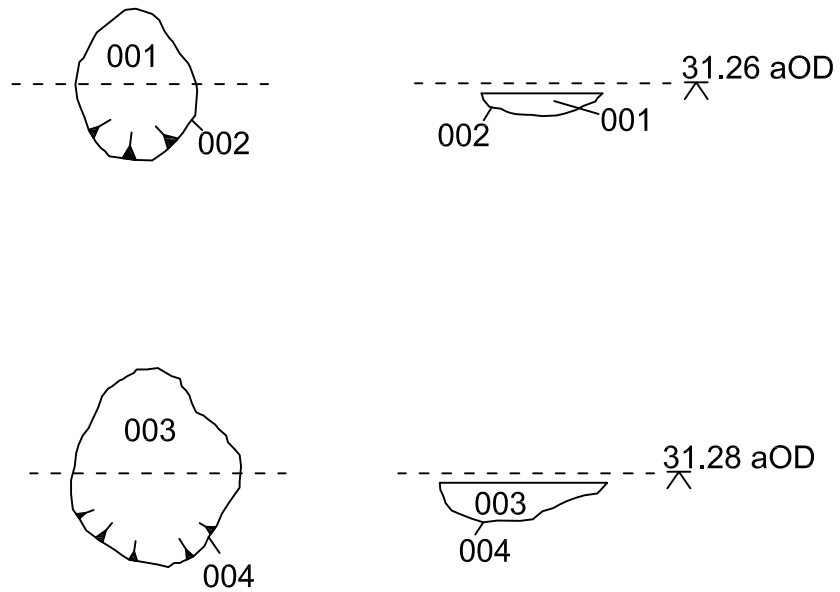
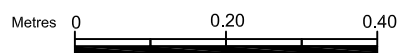


Figure 5
Possible postholes



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6. Conclusions

- 6.1 No significant archaeological deposits, features or finds were found during the watching brief other than the two, heavily truncated, possible postholes and as a result no further archaeological work is necessary within area A. However the preservation of such features, even though they are heavily truncated, indicates there is good potential for the survival of other archaeological features elsewhere on the site.

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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Johns R A 2002 *Cloddach Quarry Extension; Cultural heritage desk based assessment*. Entec UK Limited; unpublished report.

Appendix I

Harris matrix

