

**BRADWELL QUARRY
FORMERLY RIVENHALL AIRFIELD
ESSEX**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION AND EXCAVATION
PHASE 4.2**



Essex County Council

FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT

January 2009

**BRADWELL QUARRY
FORMERLY RIVENHALL AIRFIELD
ESSEX**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION AND EXCAVATION

PHASE 4.2

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1. Bradwell Quarry: location of phase 4.2 and pits 602 and 605

BRADWELL QUARRY, FORMER RIVENHALL AIRFIELD, ESSEX
ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION AND EXCAVATION
INTERIM REPORT - PHASE 4.2

Client: Blackwater Aggregates Ltd

NGR: TL 82375 21070

Site Code: RHRA 01

Oasis No: essexcou1-53628

Dates of Fieldwork: 18/6/08 to 13/8/08

SUMMARY

Topsoil stripping of phase 4.2 at Bradwell Quarry was monitored for archaeological features, deposits and finds by Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit on behalf of Blackwater Aggregates Ltd.

The stripping revealed a small quantity of unstratified worked flint and two small Middle Iron Age pits. The flint lay thinly scattered and there were no concentrations. The pits were intercutting and were uncovered at the far northern end of the investigated area. Both contained small quantities of burnt flint and Middle Iron Age pottery.

The discovery of the two pits complements earlier discoveries made at Bradwell Quarry of Middle Iron Age features and finds (Peachey 2003; Allen and Roy 2006; Ennis 2008). The combined evidence suggests that the area of the quarry was extensively settled during that period, although the 2008 evidence is isolated and small-scale.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of archaeological monitoring and excavation undertaken during topsoil stripping of phase 4.2 at Bradwell Quarry. The archaeological work was carried out by Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) on behalf of Blackwater Aggregates Ltd, who was advised by its archaeological consultant, the Guildhouse Consultancy.

The archaeological monitoring and excavation was undertaken in accordance with the Archaeological Programme specified by the Essex County Council Historic Environment team (ECC HEM 2000), the Proposal for Archaeological Observation prepared by the Guildhouse Consultancy (2000), and the Written Scheme of Investigation produced by ECC FAU (2000 and 2007).

The site archive will be deposited at Braintree Museum. A digital copy of this report will be accessible via Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (www.oasis.ac.uk/).

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location, topography and geology

Bradwell Quarry lies 7km east of Braintree and occupies the northern half of a former World War II Airfield. It sits on a low plateau to the south of the River Blackwater and comprises 62ha of arable land. Phase 4.2 is located towards the quarry's north-eastern corner and is traversed by a concrete runway.

The geology of the site consists of Kesgrave Sands and Gravels, overlain by a thick deposit of Boulder Clay which was deposited at the end of the Anglian glaciation. The overlying topsoil is redeposited and is rarely more than 0.3m thick.

2.2 Previous fieldwork in the quarry

Phases 1.1 to 1.3 and 3.1 (west)

There were no archaeological remains in phase 1.1. Phase 1.2 revealed Middle Iron Age pits, ditches and gullies, and phase 3.1 (west) a probable Middle Iron Age round-house and boundary ditch. The stripping of phase 3.1 (west) uncovered a medieval pit (Peachey 2003).

Phase 1.4

Multi-period remains were present in phase 1.4 (Allen and Roy 2006). The earliest comprised several Middle Iron Age pits and an Early Saxon pit containing a disturbed cremation vessel. Post-dating these was a large rectangular ditched enclosure dated to the 12th to mid-13th century. The enclosure contained pits, a well and internal sub-divisions and may have been used for domestic occupation. A second, albeit smaller, enclosure was added in the 13th to 15th century. Further 13th to 15th-century ditches drained a depression to the south. Also present were large post-medieval field boundary ditches. Some of these implied continuity between the medieval and post-medieval periods because they respected the late medieval enclosure.

Phases 2.1 to 2.3 (including south bund)

The stripping of phase 2.1 and a large bund to the south revealed three Middle Bronze Age pits, a possible Roman ditched trackway and further post-medieval ditches. Phase 2.2 and most of phase 2.3 were occupied by modern material filling a large natural hollow (Germany 2006).

Phases 3.1 (east), 3.2, 3.3 and 4.1

Phases 3.1 (east) to 4.1 contained Middle Bronze Age, Roman and medieval pits and a medieval gully (Ennis 2008).

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the archaeological monitoring of the topsoil stripping at Bradwell Quarry is to identify and excavate and record any archaeological remains which have survived the construction of the World War II airfield.

4.0 METHOD

The topsoil was removed by a tracked mechanical excavator with a broad flat-bladed bucket. The monitoring of the stripping of the phase was carried out continuously for the first day and a half, but was downgraded to intermittent site visits thereafter. The decision to do this was made with the agreement of the ECC HEM monitoring officer, and was undertaken after the likely archaeological significance of the area and machining levels had been established.

The archaeological work was undertaken in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* and the Association of Local Government Officers' *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (IFA 1999; Gurney 2003). The ECC FAU is a registered archaeological organisation with the Institute of Field Archaeologists and uses its own recording system to record all archaeological deposits and features (ECC FAU 2006).

5.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS

The monitoring discovered a small quantity of unstratified worked flint and two small Middle Iron Age pits. More detailed descriptions of the pits and their fills can be found in Appendix 1.

The flint lay thinly scattered over the area and was discovered lying on the surface of the exposed natural clay. There were no concentrations.

The two pits were intercutting and were uncovered at the far northern end of the stripped area. Pit 605 was about 0.15m deeper than pit 602. The stratigraphic relationship between them was not established. Both contained small quantities of burnt flint and Middle Iron Age pottery. Pit 605 also contained fragments of long bone shaft from a large mammal.

6.0 FINDS by Joyce Compton

Small quantities of finds were recovered from three contexts in phase 4.2; these have been recorded by count and weight, in grams, by context. Full quantification details can be found in Appendix 2. The finds are described by category below.

6.1 Pottery by N.J. Lavender

The monitoring produced a very small quantity of prehistoric pottery (twenty-six sherds, weighing 136g) from two contexts. The material has been recorded according to a system devised for prehistoric pottery in Essex (Brown 1988). Most of the pottery is flint-tempered, with no diagnostic features, but a single sherd from fill 604 of pit 602 is in a sand-tempered fabric, suggesting a Middle Iron Age date. This sherd also shows a sharp carination at its edge, possibly belonging to a Form K bowl, which would confirm this date.

6.2 Flints and burnt flints by Tony Blowers

A total of twenty-four flints, nine worked, fourteen burnt and one unworked, were retrieved from three contexts. All of the worked pieces are unstratified (601) and appear to have been hard-hammer struck from a single, dark, honey-brown nodule. Two flakes have been subjected to some light retouch but for what purpose is unclear, as the retouch is minimal. Although there are no clearly diagnostic pieces in the assemblage, the knapping technique suggests a later prehistoric date.

All of the burnt pieces from pits 602 and 605 are typical of the residue from a prehistoric cooking feature and the presence of animal bone and pottery in the same contexts further supports this theory.

6.3 Animal bone

A single context, fill 607 of pit 605, produced animal bone. This comprises fragments of a long bone shaft from a large mammal. The bone is in good condition but there is insufficient detail for full identification.

6.4 Comments on the assemblage

The few finds are largely prehistoric in date. No further work is required at this stage and all of the finds should be retained.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

The monitoring of phase 4.2 has found a small amount of prehistoric worked flint and two intercutting Middle Iron Age pits.

The presence of the residual worked flint is consistent with the Middle Bronze Age pits and finds, which were revealed during the monitoring of the southern bund and phase 3.3, and is perhaps further evidence to the exploitation of the area of Bradwell Quarry during that period.

The Middle Iron Age pits complement the other Middle Iron Age remains which have been previously discovered at Bradwell Quarry. Middle Iron Age pits, ditches and gullies have been found in phase 1.2 and a probable Middle Iron Age round-house in phase 1.3. Although the combined evidence is fragmentary, it is probably sufficient to indicate that the area of Bradwell Quarry was extensively settled and farmed during the period in question. Archaeological investigations in Essex often reveal Middle Iron Age remains, and it seems

increasingly certain that the region in general was extensively settled during that period. The precise nature of that activity at Bradwell Quarry, however, remains uncertain because of the poor preservation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The archaeological work was commissioned and funded by Blackwater Aggregates Ltd, who was advised by the Guildhouse Consultancy. The assistance of Patrick Wigg and Lee Turner (Blackwater Aggregates Ltd), Clive Fletcher (GKL Southern Ltd), and the archaeological consultant, Adrian Havercroft (The Guildhouse Consultancy) is gratefully acknowledged.

The archaeological monitoring was undertaken by Mark Germany. The surveying and the illustration were done by Andrew Lewsey. The finds were processed by Phil McMichael and were analysed by Joyce Compton, Nick Lavender and Tony Blowers. The project was managed by Patrick Allen of ECC FAU and was monitored by Teresa O'Connor of ECC HEM.

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APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DATA

All dimensions (Length x Width x Depth) are in metres

Context	Category	Description	Date
601	Artefacts	Unstratified surface finds. Phase 4.2	
602	Pit	Elongated pit with rounded terminal. Moderately to steeply-sloping sides, slightly-concave base. 0.63 x 0.8 x 0.2. Filled by 603 and 604	MIA
603	Deposit	Brownish yellow plastic clay with infrequent gravel and flecks of charcoal. Primary fill of 602	MIA
604	Deposit	Brownish grey friable clay silt with infrequent gravel and flecks of charcoal. Top fill of 602	MIA
605	Pit	Elongated pit with rounded terminal. Steeply-sloping sides, concave base. 1.56 x 0.44 x 0.35. Filled by 606 to 608	MIA
606	Deposit	Brownish yellow plastic clay with infrequent gravel and flecks of charcoal. Primary fill of 605	MIA
607	Deposit	Brownish grey friable silt clay with infrequent gravel and flecks of charcoal. Secondary fill of 605	MIA
608	Deposit	Brownish yellow plastic clay with infrequent gravel. Top fill of 605	MIA

APPENDIX 2: FINDS DATA

Finds data

Context	Feature	Count	Weight	Description	Date
601	u/s	9	120	Flint flakes	-
604	602	2	86	Burnt flints	-
		6	12	Pottery; base and body sherds	Prehistoric
607	605	13	76	Animal bone; long bone shaft, large mammal, in fragments	-
		1	30	Flint lump	-
		12	286	Burnt flints	-
		20	124	Pottery; body sherds and crumbs	Prehistoric

Flint catalogue

Context	Feature	Description	Date
601	u/s	Flake, primary Six flakes, secondary Flake, secondary, with rough retouch Flake, secondary, with minimal retouch along one edge	LBA (?)
604	602	Two burnt pieces	
607	605	Unworked piece Twelve burnt pieces	

APPENDIX 3: EHER SUMMARY

Site name/Address: Bradwell Quarry, formerly Rivenhall Airfield	
Parish: Bradwell	District: Braintree
NGR: TL 82375 21070	Site Code: RHRA 01
Type of Work: Archaeological monitoring and excavation	Site Director/Group: Mark Germany, Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit
Date of Work: 18/6/08 to 13/8/08	Size of Area Investigated: 2.7ha
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Braintree	Client: Blackwater Aggregates Ltd
Further Seasons Anticipated?: Yes	Related EHR Nos.: 14183
Final Report: Essex Archaeology and History (full report)	
Periods represented: Prehistoric	
SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:	
<p>Topsoil stripping of phase 4.2 at Bradwell Quarry was monitored for archaeological features, deposits and finds by Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit on behalf of Blackwater Aggregates Ltd.</p> <p>The stripping revealed a small quantity of unstratified worked flint and two small Middle Iron Age pits. The flint lay thinly scattered and there were no concentrations. The two pits were intercutting and were uncovered at the far northern end of the stripped area. Both contained small quantities of burnt flint and Middle Iron Age pottery.</p> <p>The discovery of the two pits complements earlier discoveries made at Bradwell Quarry of Middle Iron Age features and finds (Peachey 2003; Allen and Roy 2006; Ennis 2008). The combined evidence suggests that the area of the quarry was extensively settled during that period.</p>	
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Author of Summary: Mark Germany	Date of Summary: January 2009



Fig.1. Bradwell Quarry: location of Phase 4.2 and pits 602 and 605