

**An Archaeological Evaluation
at Hermitage Quarry, Oaken Wood, Kent**

NGR TQ 571685, 155758

**ASE Project No: 170588
Site Code: OWH13**

**ASE Report No: 2017428
Oasis ID: archaeol6-298051**

By Gemma Ward

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Abstract

This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out by Archaeology South-East at Hermitage Quarry, Oaken Wood, Maidstone, Kent. NGR 571685, 155758, on the 14th September 2017. The fieldwork was commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of Gallagher Group to undertake further archaeological investigations at Hermitage Quarry in advance of further quarrying.

Four trenches measuring up to 80m in length were planned. Due to prior ground reduction work on the site only one of the proposed trenches was able to be excavated. Trench 3 revealed evidence of the backfill of an earlier (probably post-medieval) quarry. The remains associated with this feature were limited to waste once extraction of usable building stone had taken place.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Background

1.1.1 Archaeology South-East was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd on behalf of Gallagher Group to undertake further archaeological investigations at Hermitage Quarry, Oaken Wood, Kent, hereafter referred to as 'the site'. The site is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 571685, 155758 and its location is shown on Figure 1.

1.1.2 The trench locations covered by this archaeological evaluation report are shown in Figure 2.

1.2 Geology and Topography

1.2.1 Topographically, the site lies on the upper north-facing slope of a ridge forming part of the Lower Greensand escarpment that runs along the northern margin of the Weald. The site slopes down to the north between c.90 and c.70m aOD. There are also two prominent dry valleys forming an inverted Y-shaped system within the centre of the site.

1.2.1 According to the British Geological Survey, the site lies on an underlying bedrock geology of Hythe Beds, overlain by Head deposits, with a belt of Sandgate Beds running along the southern part of the site (BGS 2017).

1.3 Planning Background

1.3.1 Extraction activities are due to be extended within Hermitage Quarry. The area proposed for removal of material contains earthwork features identified in preceding desk-based and historic landscape assessment reports (OA 2010; ASE 2016a). Following discussion between CgMs Consulting, their client and the Heritage Conservation Group Kent County Council (HCG KCC) it was recommended that a programme of archaeological evaluation works be implemented, targeting landscape features identified in these earlier reports.

1.4 Scope of Report

1.4.1 This document represents an archaeological evaluation report prepared following consultation between ASE, CgMs and the HCG KCC. It has been prepared in accordance with relevant Standards and Guidance of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2014a; 2014b) and the preceding Written Scheme of Investigation (ASE 2017a). All work will be reported upon in line with guidelines set out in Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE; Historic England 2015).

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Overview

2.1.1 Existing documents relating to the site include: a desk-based assessment (OA 2010) covering the broader archaeological background for the site and a subsequent historic landscape assessment report (ASE 2016a) which includes the results of site visits intended to confirm the archaeological origin of the features identified within the DBA report and to identify and briefly record any additional features. An Environmental Archaeological Assessment (QUEST 2012) examining the potential of soils on the site, a geoarchaeological evaluation undertaken by ASE in 2015 (ASE 2016b) and a post-excavation assessment presenting the results of archaeological and geoarchaeological investigations undertaken by ASE in 2016 (ASE 2017b) have also been produced. The information within these documents is not repeated in full here.

1.2.2 There are no Scheduled Monuments at the site, which is designated as 'Ancient Replanted Woodland' by English Nature. The site has been considered to have low-moderate potential for prehistoric to medieval archaeology (OA 2010; ASE 2016a). The majority of the landscape features identified by the aerial photographic assessment are likely to be post-medieval in date.

1.2.3 The pollen analyses carried out by QUEST (2012) took samples from the top and subsoils at the site. This demonstrated that pollen and seeds survived within these deposits that characterised the surrounding woodland and areas of cultivation.

1.2.4 The geoarchaeological evaluation undertaken by ASE in 2015 (ASE 2016b) proved the presence of capture points for Pleistocene sediments within gull and doline features, which have scientific and archaeological potential. OSL results dated the top 2 metres of one gull to between 153 ± 14 and 133 ± 16 kya (MIS 6 and MIS 5e). The gulls in particular were concluded to be of significant archaeological importance due to their low-energy, datable depositional environments and palaeoenvironmental potential. A single piece of possible Palaeolithic worked flint was also collected during this work.

1.2.5 Subsequent archaeological and geoarchaeological investigations carried out by ASE in 2016 (ASE 2017b) did not recover any artefacts or identify any standard archaeological features.

1.2.6 Archaeological activity in the vicinity of the site is evidenced by the results of recent archaeological investigations at Hermitage Lane, situated c.700m to the east. These investigations identified a possible enclosure of pre-Middle Bronze Age date and a Late Iron Age/early Roman agricultural settlement, which also encompassed evidence for salt processing as well as funerary activity (ASE 2016c).

2.2 Project Aims and Objectives

2.2.1 The broad aims of the evaluation, in keeping with previous similar projects were:

- To assess the character, extent, preservation, significance, date and quality of any such remains and deposits
- To assess how they might be affected by the development of the site
- To establish the extent to which previous groundworks and/or other processes have affected archaeological deposits at the site
- To assess what options should be considered for mitigation

2.2.2 The site specific aims were:

- To identify and assess the landscape features identified in the desk-based and historic landscape assessment reports

2.2.3 The evaluation had the potential to address the following research priority identified by the South-Eastern Research Framework (SERF)

- Post-medieval industry 2) Woodland Industries: The relationship of different woodland industries to each other, as well as their woodland environment; Survey of all industrial sites and the tracks that link them, domestic areas etc.
- Post-medieval industry 4) Extractive Industry: The use and distribution of the various types of local building stone and aggregate; the relationship between local building materials and social status.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

3.1 Fieldwork Methodology

- 3.1.1 It was not possible to excavate trenches 1, 2 and 4 due to prior ground reduction carried out before the evaluation commenced. The trial trench evaluation comprised the mechanical excavation of one 1.8m wide trench; measuring 20m in length. This trench was targeted on a landscape feature identified in previous assessment reports (OA 2010; ASE 2016a) as relating to former quarrying activities (Figure 2).
- 3.1.2 A Risk Assessment was produced prior to the commencement of the work. The locations of all the trenches were also checked with a CAT scanner prior to the commencement of excavation.
- 3.1.3 The trench was excavated using a suitable mechanical excavator. The overburden was excavated in spits of no more than 0.20m with artefact recovery being attempted at every scrape. Care was taken to follow the profile of the feature it was targeted on (post-medieval quarrying; ASE 2016a, feature 5), however, due to previous importation of material to level the ground the targeted feature was no longer visible on the ground surface. The excavator was fitted with a smooth grading bucket.
- 3.1.4 The trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 2.4m; at a depth of 1.2m below ground level the trench was stepped in by 1.2m prior to continuing to full depth in order to facilitate safe access/working space.

3.3 Archive

- 3.3.1 ASE informed Maidstone Museum prior to the commencement of fieldwork that a site archive would be generated and were advised they are not currently accepting archaeological depositions. The site archive is currently held at the offices of ASE and will be deposited at Maidstone Museum in due course, once they reopen their archives. The contents of the archive are tabulated below (Table 1).

Context sheets	5
Section sheets	0
Plans sheets	0
Colour photographs	0
B&W photos	0
Digital photos	5
Context register	1
Drawing register	0
Watching brief forms	0
Trench Record forms	1

Table 1: Quantification of site paper archive

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Trench 3

Context	Type	Interpretation	Length m	Width m	Thickness m	Height m AOD
[3/001]	Layer	Topsoil	Trench	Trench	0.31-0.33	75.09
[3/002]	Layer	Made ground	Trench	Trench	0.77-1.78	
[3/003]	Layer	Buried Topsoil	Trench	Trench	0.26	
[3/004]	Layer	Quarry Fill	Trench	Trench	0.70	
[3/005]	Layer	Natural	Trench	Trench	0.06-0.11	74.05

Table 2: Trench 3 list of recorded contexts

4.1.1 Summary of results

Trench 3 measured c.20m in length and was targeted upon a small post-medieval quarry previously noticeable upon the ground surface (ASE 2016a, feature 5). It was clear that the area had received imported material previously and had been landscaped to some degree. The natural horizon comprised firm, mid orange brown, sand and sandstone of the Lower Greensand Formation [3/005]. Overlying this was [3/004] a friable silty sand of light to medium brown colouration probably related to backfill of the former quarry (ASE 2016a; feature 5). This measured up-to 0.70m in thickness in the middle and SW end of the trench sloping up to the north-east. This was overlain by a buried dark grey brown former topsoil [3/003]. This was of firm consistency due to compaction by the overburden [3/002]. [3/002] - comprised of a friable, light orange brown, redeposited sand, with inclusions of modern rubble, such as red brick and concrete. Overlying this was [3/001] a recent loose, dark greyish brown, silty topsoil, with infrequent small stone and gravel inclusions.

5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Overview of stratigraphic sequence

- 5.1.1 Trench 3 succeeded in its aim of identifying deposits related to earlier quarrying activity (ASE 2016a). Remains comprised the fill of a probable post-medieval quarry and it is likely that silty sand [3/004] comprised the waste material once usable stone had been extracted. The sterile nature of this fill meant there was little evidence to date the quarrying activity, although it is presumed to be post-medieval in date and related (ASE 2016a). It was clear that the area had received imported material previously (Contexts [3/001] and [3/002]). This was derived from earlier quarrying activity and landscaping of modern date. The made ground was topped with a by a newly formed topsoil, complete with turf.
- 5.1.2 Landscaping may have obscured any further archaeological features had they been present. It is likely that the post-medieval quarrying activity evidenced by deposit [3/004] would have truncated any earlier remains had they been present.

5.2 Deposit survival and existing impacts

- 5.2.1 The archaeological evaluation encountered significant landscaping in the area of Trench 3, however, the presence of earlier quarrying activity (ASE 2016a; feature 5) was encountered.

5.3 Consideration of research aims

- 5.3.1 Previous groundworks have had a negative effect at the areas that have been previously quarried away. Any shallow features in the area of Trench 3 may have been destroyed through landscaping, however, feature 5 (ASE 2016a) appeared to be intact.
- 5.3.2 Though the archaeological evaluation encountered evidence of earlier quarrying activity associated remains were limited to a sterile layer of backfilled waste once stone had been extracted. It was likely that the quarry (ASE2016a 'feature 5') related to post-medieval extraction of sandstone carried out by commoners. There was no material to date the activity more closely or suggest the length of time that the quarry was in operation. It is possible that the Ragstone of the Hythe and Sandgate Beds would have been used in local building activities.

5.4 Conclusions

- 5.4.1 Three trench locations were removed by previous quarrying. The remainder identified deposits of modern made ground derived from landscaping as well as the backfill of an earlier (probably post-medieval) quarry. The remains associated with this feature were limited to waste once extraction of usable building stone had taken place.

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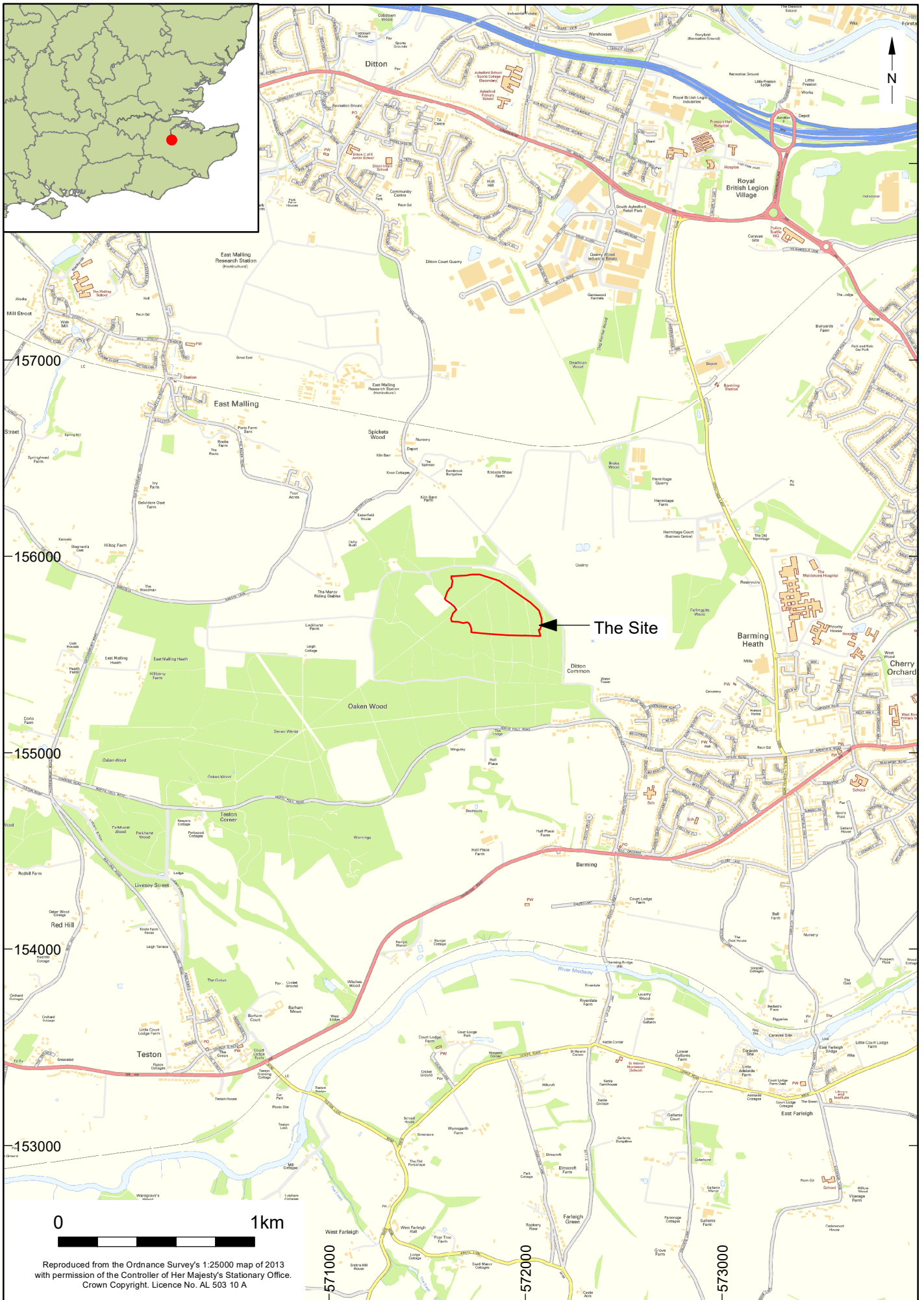
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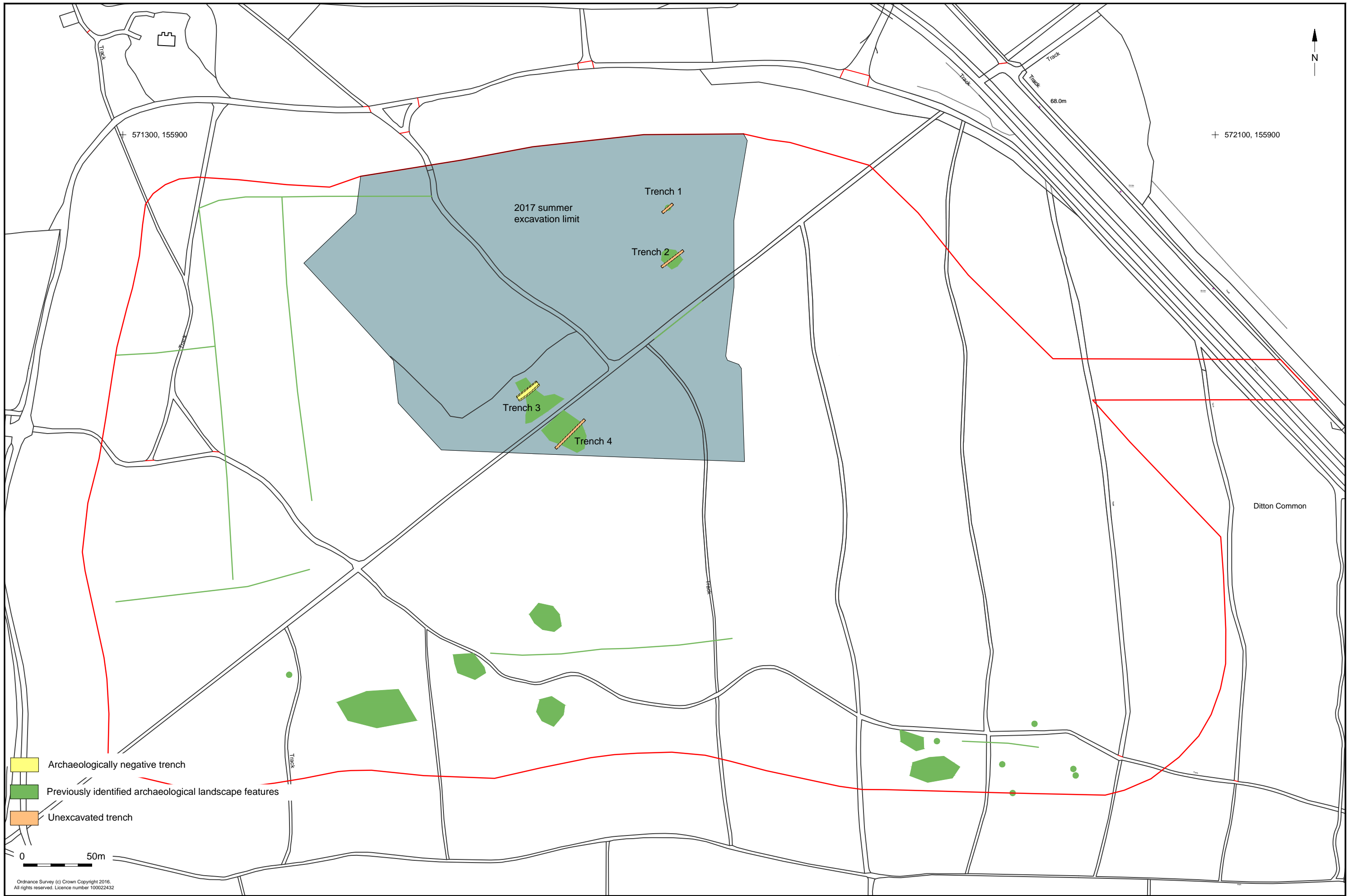
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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© Archaeology South-East		Hermitage Quarry, Oaken Wood, Kent		Fig. 1
Project Ref: 170588	October 2017	Site location		
Report Ref: 2017428	Drawn by: NH			



- Archaeologically negative trench
- Previously identified archaeological landscape features
- Unexcavated trench

0 50m

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© Archaeology South-East		Hermitage Quarry, Oaken Wood, Kent		Fig. 2
Project Ref: 170588	October 2017	Trench location		
Report Ref: 2017428	Drawn by: NH			

HER Summary

HER enquiry no.						
Site code	OWH13					
Project code	170588					
Planning reference	N/A					
Site address	Hermitage Quarry, Oaken Wood, Kent					
District/Borough	Maidstone					
NGR (12 figures)	NGR 571685, 155758					
Geology	Hythe and Sandgate Beds, Head deposits					
Fieldwork type	Eval X	Excav	WB	HBR	Survey	Other
Date of fieldwork	14 th September 2017					
Sponsor/client	CgMs/Gallagher group					
Project manager	Jon Sygrave					
Project supervisor	Gemma Ward					
	Palaeolithic	Mesolithic	Neolithic	Bronze Age	Iron Age	
	Roman	Anglo-Saxon	Medieval	Post-Medieval	Other	
Project summary (100 word max)	<p><i>This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out by Archaeology South-East at Hermitage Quarry, Oaken Wood, Maidstone, Kent. NGR 571685, 155758, on the 14th September 2017. The fieldwork was commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of Gallagher Group to undertake further archaeological and investigations at Hermitage Quarry in advance of further quarrying.</i></p> <p><i>Four trenches measuring up to 80m in length were planned. Due to prior ground reduction work on the site only one of the proposed trenches was able to be excavated. Trench 3, revealed evidence of the backfill of an earlier (probably post-medieval) quarry. The remains associated with this feature were limited to waste once extraction of usable building stone had taken place.</i></p>					
Museum/Accession No.	N/A					

Finds summary

Find type	Material	Period	Quantity

OASIS Form

OASIS ID: archaeol6-298051

Project details

Project name	An Archaeological Evaluation at Hermitage Quarry, Oaken Wood, Kent
Short description of the project	This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out by Archaeology South-East at Hermitage Quarry, Oaken Wood, Maidstone, Kent. NGR 571685, 155758, on the 14th September 2017. The fieldwork was commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of Gallagher Group to undertake further archaeological and investigations at Hermitage Quarry in advance of further quarrying. Four trenches measuring up to 80m in length were planned. Due to prior ground reduction work on the site only one of the proposed trenches was able to be excavated. Trench 3, revealed evidence of the backfill of an earlier (probably post-medieval) quarry. The remains associated with this feature were limited to waste once extraction of usable building stone had taken place.
Project dates	Start: 14-09-2017 End: 15-09-2017
Previous/future work	Yes / Yes
Any associated project reference codes	OWH13 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 7 - Mineral extraction
Current Land use	Woodland 1 - Deciduous native
Monument type	QUARRY Post Medieval
Significant Finds	0 None
Methods & techniques	"Targeted Trenches"
Development type	Mineral extraction (e.g. sand, gravel, stone, coal, ore, etc.)
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS
Position in the planning process	Not known / Not recorded

Project location

Country England
Site location KENT MAIDSTONE MAIDSTONE Hermitage Quarry, Oaken Wood, Kent
Postcode ME16 9NT
Study area 40 Square metres
Site coordinates TQ 571685 155758 50.917631209627 0.23621375086 50 55 03 N 000 14 10 E Point
Lat/Long Datum Unknown
Height OD / Depth Min: 73m Max: 74m

Project creators

Name of Organisation Archaeology South East

Project brief originator Kent County Council

Project design originator Archaeology South-East

Project director/manager Jon Sygrave

Project supervisor Gemma Ward

Type of sponsor/funding body Gallagher Group

Type of sponsor/funding body CgMs Consulting

Name of sponsor/funding body CgMs

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No

Digital Archive Exists? No

Paper Archive Exists? No

Entered by andy margetts (a.margetts@ucl.ac.uk)

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11 October 2017

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