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ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

S O U T H W E S T

**Warmwell Quarry North-South Footpath,
West Knighton, Dorset**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andy Weale

Site Code: WQD06/133

(SY 7437 8896)

Warmwell Quarry North-South Footpath, West Knighton, Dorset

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
for Aggregate Industries**

by Andrew Weale
Thames Valley Archaeological Services
Ltd

Site Code WQD 06/133

April 2012

Summary

Site name: Warmwell Quarry North-South Footpath, West Knighton, Dorset

Grid reference: SY 7437 8896

Site activity: Archaeological Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 19th-23rd March 2012

Project manager: Andrew Weale

Site supervisor: Andrew Weale

Site code: WQD 06/133

Area of site: 0.28 ha

Summary of results: Two pits and three post holes were observed. One of the pits is certainly of modern date, two other features probably so and it is likely that all of the features are of modern or Post-medieval date.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Dorset County Museum Service in due course.

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www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp.*

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Warmwell Quarry North-South Footpath, West Knighton, Dorset An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andrew Weale

Report 06/133

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Warmwell Quarry, West Knighton and Warmwell, Dorset (SY 7437 8896) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Robert Westell of Aggregate Industries UK Ltd, Marston House, Frome, Somerset, BA11 5DU.

Planning permission has been granted (1/D/2008/2365) for the extraction of gravel and sand from the area occupied by two footpaths which cross Warmwell Quarry. The permission is subject to a condition (26) which states no soil stripping shall take place except in accordance with a written scheme of archaeological investigation and recording that has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Mineral Planning Authority.

This is in accordance with the with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16, 1990) and the Council's policies on archaeology, in order to satisfy the archaeological condition placed on the planning permission. It is acknowledged that PPG16 has been superseded by *Planning for the Historic Environment* (PPS5 2010). The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Steven Wallis, Senior Archaeological Officer with Dorset County Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Weale, from the 19th to 23rd of March 2012 and the site code is WQD 06/133. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services South West, Taunton and will be deposited at Dorset County Museum Service in due course.

This report is concerned only with work carried out on the north-south aligned footpath.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located to the west of Knighton Heath Wood with the villages of West Knighton and Broadmayne to the south, West Stafford to the east and Woodsford and the River Frome to the north, (Fig. 1). The site slopes gently down from the south to the north from 65.2m above Ordnance Datum to 62.1m and consists of a gravel-surfaced footpath with an earthen bank and hedge on the west side with a small area of former farm land beyond. To the west and east are the current quarry workings of the quarry. To the south is an area of restored former quarry and to the north is a road and farm. The underlying geology is shown as Quaternary seventh gravel

terrace and Eocene sand (BGS 2000), the southern part of the site was seen to be capped with a band of gravel which ran out two thirds of the way to the north where the natural geology was observed to be sand with occasional clay bands.

Archaeological background

West Knighton is surrounded by areas of intense prehistoric and Roman occupation, perhaps best exemplified by the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age funerary and ritual landscape of the Flagstones causewayed enclosure, the Mount Pleasant henge complex and later prehistoric to early post-Roman activity centred towards Dorchester to the west of the site (Davies *et al.* 2002; Wainwright 1979). Closer to the site are the Bronze Age ring ditches discovered on the route of the West Stafford Bypass together with Neolithic pottery and Roman pottery (Heaton 1991; Richards 1991). A further barrow is known from aerial photography 500m to the north west of the site and Sandy barrow a further 1.1km from the site.

The site lies within Warmwell Quarry where extensive field walking and trial pitting revealed a scatter of struck flints and a small scatter of post-medieval pottery (Leach 1990). Subsequent excavation in advance of gravel extraction produced evidence of a group of pits and postholes associated with Middle to Late Bronze Age pottery and cremated bone (Leach 1994) A second group of areas of burning with some of fired clay suggestive of hearths and others of open bonfires or cremation pyres (Bevan 1993). On the margins of Warmwell Airfield Quarry and Warmwell Quarry three round barrows of Bronze Age date all appear to have been destroyed by gravel extraction or the construction of RAF Warmwell. A further barrow, Huck Barrow, is extant on the boundary of Warmwell Quarry and Knighton Heath and has been recently surveyed (Corney and Morris 2010). A Bronze Age urnfield cemetery was recorded at Perry Gravel Pit in Knighton Heath Wood to the south. The urnfield comprised at least five pits but a further 20 or 30 cremation pits may have been present. Further to the south at Broadmayne a series of Bronze Age crouched burials were uncovered during building works (Young 1973; Hewitt 1985) and at West Stafford late Neolithic and Bronze Age pottery was recovered (Cotton 1998). Large scale excavations in advance of gravel exaction at Woodsford Farm to the north east of the site has revealed a ring gully representing a possible Bronze Age barrow, or hut circle and a very extensive late Roman complex of fields and enclosures (Weale 2010; Pine 2012a and b)

In medieval times, West Knighton is mentioned in the Domesday Book as Chenistetone (Williams and Martin 2002) and was owed by William of Ecouis although before the conquest it was owned by two thanes. The name Knighton may come from Chenistetone or be a reference to the Knights Hospitaller who were granted

part of the manor and founded a preceptory at Friary Mayne in the south of the Parish some time between 1291 and 1338 (VCH 1908). The preceptory survived until the Dissolution but was restored under Queen Mary in 1558 but dissolved finally under Queen Elizabeth in 1564. Since at least the 19th century the area of Knighton Heath has been the site of gravel and sand exaction of which Warmwell Quarry is the latest phase. The footpath was used as a quarry haul road from the late 1950's (R. Barns pers comm.).

Objectives and methodology

The general objectives of the project were to excavate and record all archaeological deposits and features within the areas affected by the groundworks. This was to involve examination of all the areas of previously undisturbed ground stripped of overburden in the footpath area. Topsoil and overburden was to be removed by a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket to expose the uppermost surface of archaeological deposits. Following machine clearance, all investigation of archaeological levels was to be by hand, with cleaning, examination and recorded both in plan and in section. All archaeological features were to be planned and sectioned as a minimum objective. A metal detector was to be used to increase the recovery of metal artefacts.

Results

The overburden removal revealed that the topsoil and gravel footpath overlay the 1950's haul road which was made up of a layer of crushed limestone over a layer of clean gravel. In the southern two thirds of the stripped area the haul road overlay a buried topsoil/subsoil horizon which overlaying the gravel natural geology. Where the natural geology changed from gravel to sand towards the northern end of the site, the haul road cut into the natural sand and the buried topsoil/subsoil horizon was totally absent. The bank to the west of the haul road consisted of topsoil which contained modern brick and plastic (not collected) with a subsoil horizon beneath. The hedge which had been planted on the bank had left a noticeable root scar into both the gravel and sand natural geology along the whole length of the stripped area. In the area of the haul road where it had cut into the natural sand a series of modern wheel ruts were observed. Towards the northern end of the strip on the western edge there was a large area of modern disturbance that may represent an area of quarrying for sand.

Cut into the gravel within the central part of the strip were two pits (1 and 5) and three postholes (2, 3 and 4).

Pit 1 (Figs 3 and 4; Pl. 3)

Pit 1 was 1.04m in diameter 0.59m deep, with almost vertical sides and a concave base. It was filled with a friable mid brown grey silty sand (56) that contained two fragments of modern bottle glass and part of an iron gate latch.

Posthole 2 (Figs 3 and 4; Pl. 4)

Posthole 2 was 0.67m in diameter, 0.23m deep, with sloping sides and a concave base. It was filled with a friable mid brown grey silty sand (57) but contained no dateable artefacts. No relationship could be established with Posthole 3.

Posthole 3 (Figs 3 and 4; Pl. 4)

Posthole 3 was oval in plan 0.35m long, 0.28m wide, 0.05m deep with gently sloping sides and a flat base. It was filled with a friable mid brown grey silty sand (58), but contained no dateable artefacts. No relationship could be established with Posthole 2.

Posthole 4 (Figs 3 and 4)

Posthole 4 was oval in plan 0.76m long, 0.56m wide, 0.12m deep, with sloping sides and a flat base. It was filled with a friable mid brown grey silty sand (59), and contained a single iron object.

Pit 5 (Figs 3 and 4; Pl. 2)

Pit 5 was 0.88m in diameter 0.60m deep, with almost vertical sides and a stepped base. It was filled with a friable mid brown grey silty sand (60) that contained a single iron object.

Finds

Three iron objects were recorded but were retained on site.

Conclusion

In the area of the north-south footpath that was protected by the build-up of material by the haul road, possible archaeological features did survive. However, one feature is unambiguously of modern origin and two others, containing iron objects are probably so. With a complete absence of any other cultural material to suggest Medieval or earlier activity in this area, and the very similar nature of the fills, it seems most likely that all of the features found are of post-medieval or modern date. The footpath is clearly shown on the first edition

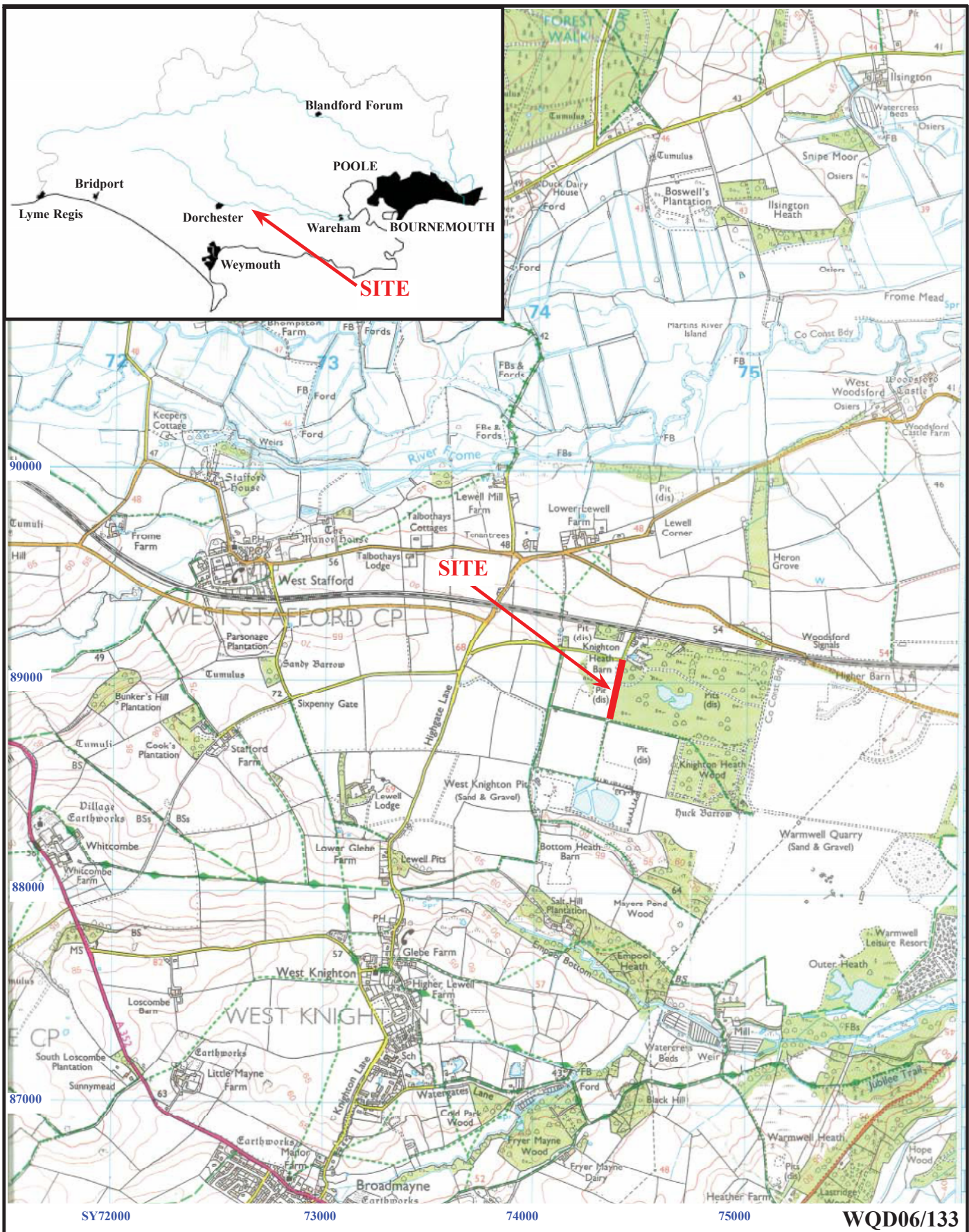
Ordnance Survey map of 1890 which also shows that the land close to the northern end was being quarried at that time. One may speculate that these features relate to this early quarrying activity in the area.

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APPENDIX 1: Feature details

| Cut | Fill (s) | Type | Date | Dating evidence |
|-----|----------|----------|--------|--------------------------|
| 1 | 56 | Pit | Modern | Bottle Glass Gate fixing |
| 2 | 57 | Posthole | | None |
| 3 | 58 | Posthole | | None |
| 4 | 59 | Posthole | | Iron Object |
| 5 | 60 | Pit | | Iron Object |



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Figure 1. Location of site within Warmwell and Dorset

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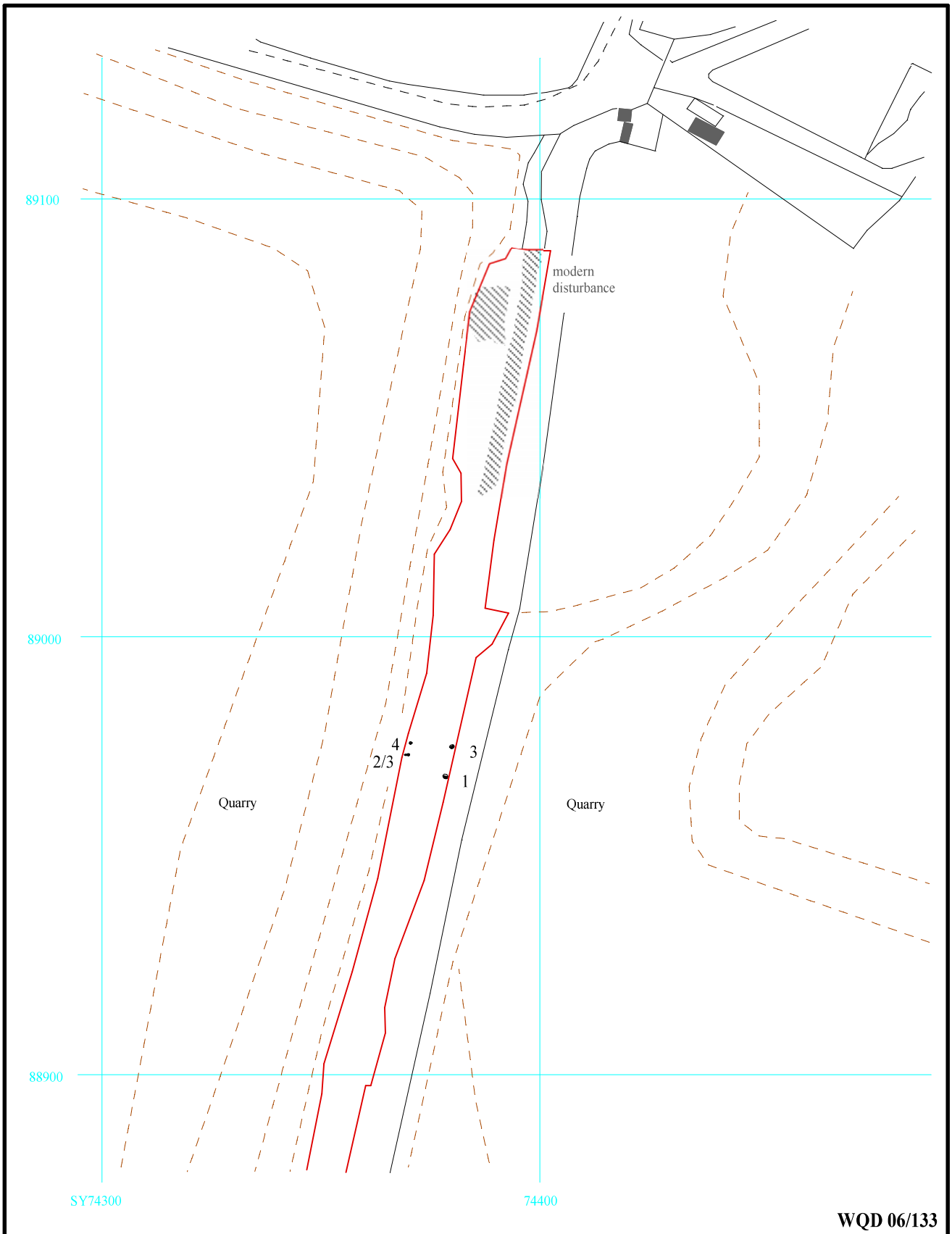
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Figure 2. Detailed location of footpath site within the quarry

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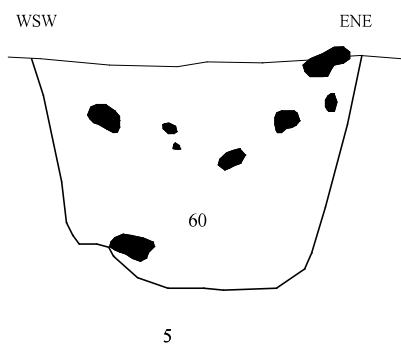
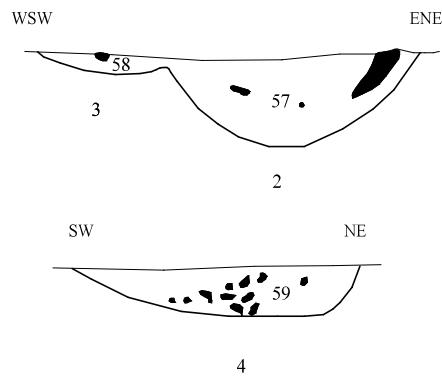
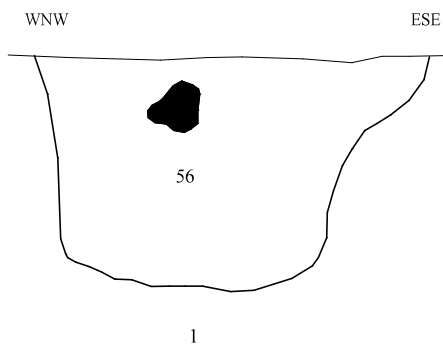
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Figure 3. Plan showing location of features investigated.



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Figure 4. Sections



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Plate 1. Footpath area, looking south, Scales: 2m and 1m



Plate 2. Pit 5 looking north west, Scales: 1m and 0.5m

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Plates 1 and 2

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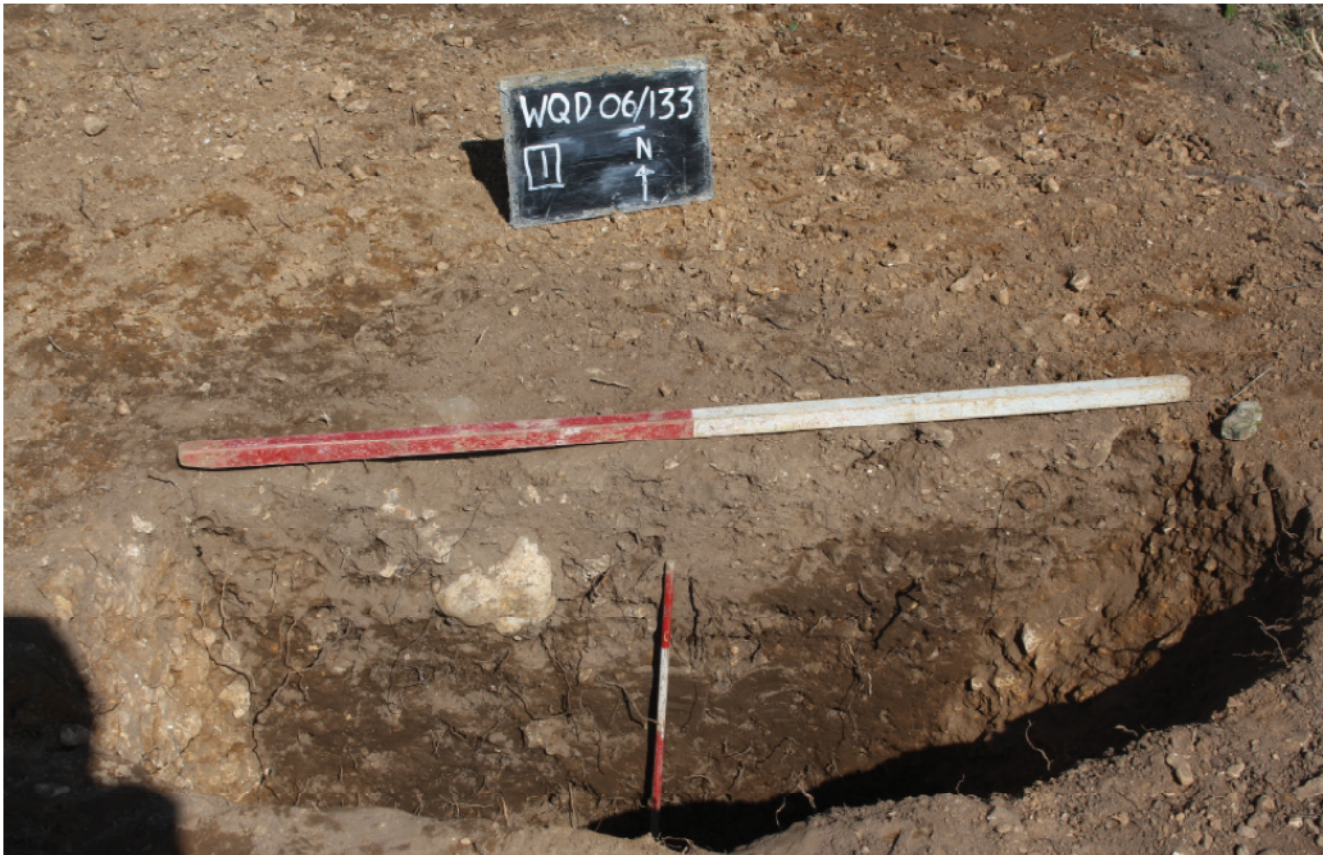


Plate 3. Pit 1 looking north, Scales: 1m and 0.5m



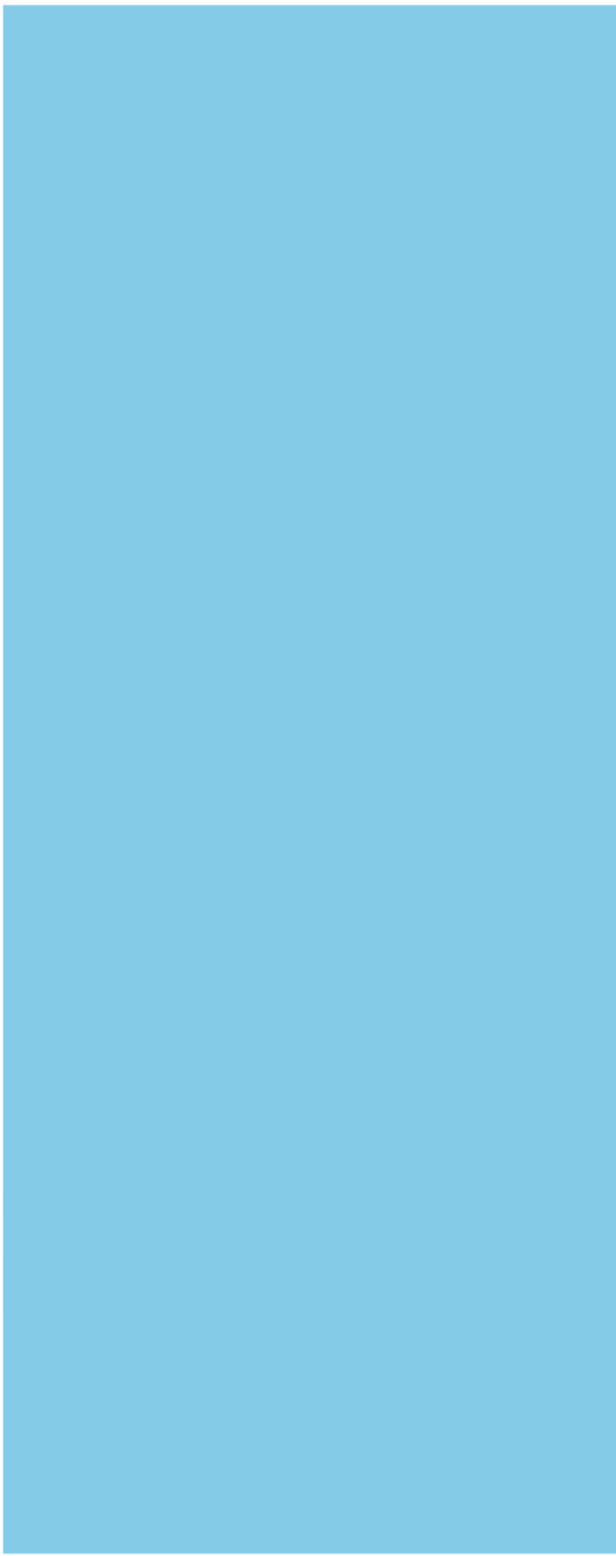
Plate 4 , Post holes 2 and 3 looking north, Scale: 0.5m

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Plates 3 and 4

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