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# 1 PEEL PLACE, HOLMROOK

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## 1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1 The project is essentially, in accordance with planning permission, to evaluate and monitor an area of land (4.3 hectares) which is gradually being removed by quarrying for the extraction of sand and gravel. This highly destructive activity is occurring in an area of known prehistoric sites and Lancaster University Archaeological Unit (LUAU) has been commissioned to undertake the work for Watsons.
- 1.1.2 The gradual nature of the project is due to the wish of the farmer, whose land is being quarried, that the land not being immediately quarried is kept in use for as long as possible. This has resulted in three phases of evaluation, so far, each comprising a segment of land further northwards as the quarrying encroaches on the farmland.
- 1.1.3 The initial work of Phase I was carried out in the southern part of the area during June 1997. The second stage of work, Phase II, was done in June 1998 and examined a block of land immediately northeast of Phase I. Phase III was completed in October 1999 and comprised a strip of land again adjacent to Phase II but further north-east.

## 1.2 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 1.2.1 Peel Place Quarry (NY 3072 5012) lies approximately 2km north of Holmrook, along the A595, on the west coast of Cumbria. It is located between the main river valleys of the Calder to the north and the Irt to the south and the landscape is gently undulating with several low hills on which there would be potential for prehistoric activity as is typified by many other sites in the North-West. The Cumbria Sites and Monuments Record (CSMR) data shows five findspots of flint artefacts in the area (CSMR numbers: 1273, 1309, 6459, 6463 and 6465) and two crop marks of enclosures of unknown date (CSMR 13542 and 13545).
- 1.2.2 During the first two phases the land not set aside for the evaluations and quarrying was under silage crop, by the third phase the smaller area of land was being used for pasture and therefore still inaccessible for evaluation and will need to be dealt with at a later date.

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## 2 METHODOLOGY

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### 2.1 PHASE I

- 2.1.1 In the first phase an area measuring 70m by 50m (3500m<sup>2</sup>) was evaluated by excavating six trenches, covering 7% of the available area. Three of these measured 30m in length and three were 20m, all were 1.8m wide. The trenches were laid out in a grid formation with two trenches aligned north/south along the brow of the hill and the remaining four were laid east/west, effectively following the line of the slope.

### 2.2 PHASE II

- 2.2.1 In this second phase an area measuring 8690m<sup>2</sup> was evaluated by means of eight machine-excavated trial trenches, which examined 5% of the available area. All eight measured 30m in length and were 1.8m wide. The trenches were laid out in a grid formation, with four trenches aligned north/south and the remaining four on an east/west alignment following the line of the slope.

### 2.3 PHASE III

- 2.3.1 This third phase of evaluation examined a plot of land further north than phase two and covered an area measuring 7500m<sup>2</sup>, of which 7% was excavated. Ten trenches were laid out in a grid formation, compatible with the previous phases. Six of the trenches were aligned north/south and the remaining four trenches were laid east/west. The northern most trench (TR15) was 25m long while the other nine were 30m in length, all were 1.8m wide, which was the width of the machine's bucket.
- 2.3.2 In order to enhance artefact retrieval, particularly of lithics, a sieving programme was implemented, comprising the dry sieving of 30 litres of excavated topsoil, through a 5mm mesh, at 5m along the length of all the trenches.

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### 3. EXCAVATION RESULTS

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#### 3.1 PHASES I – III

- 3.1.1 A common stratigraphic profile was identified within each trench comprising sandy gravels at a depth of 0.4m below the surface which was overlain by a deposit of fine sand of varying depth. The topsoil was generally 0.2m – 0.25m in depth and was a friable well draining sandy loam of the Ellerbeck Brown Earth series of soils. It also had a 15% sub-angular gravel component noted in all trenches.
- 3.1.2 No archaeological features were identified in any of the trenches. The sieving retrieved an iron nail and a number of post-medieval and modern ceramic artefacts, including clay pipe and modern table ware fragments. A number of flint pebbles and fragments were retrieved, although none of these proved to have been worked. They appeared to be distributed fairly evenly across the area.

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## 4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPACT

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- 4.1 All 24 trenches excavated in Phases I, II and III contained no significant archaeological deposits or features and therefore the proposed and ongoing quarrying of this localised area will have no adverse impact. Consequently no further archaeological recording work is deemed necessary in this current area.
- 4.2 It must be stressed, however, that the negative results of these first phases of archaeological evaluation do not indicate similar dearth of archaeological remains within the remainder of the evaluation area, particularly considering the highly localised nature of other prehistoric activity in the locale. Consequently the area presently under pasture still needs to be subject to the full programme of archaeological trial trenching in order to satisfy the planning conditions.