Archaeological Salvage Recording at Wellington Quarry, Herefordshire 2014

Moreton South Extension: Phase 2a Interim Report

Worcestershire Archaeology
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Status:	Draft for submission to client and curator
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Project reference:	P3979
Report reference:	2171
HER reference:	EHE 2057 event number
Status:	Draft for submission to client and curator
Date:	23 March 2015

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Graham Arnold and Robin Jackson

With a contribution by Elizabeth Pearson

Summary

A programme of archaeological works (salvage recording) was undertaken within the Moreton South Extension of Wellington Quarry, Herefordshire (NGR SO 5030 4730) during the period July – September 2014. The work was completed on behalf of Lafarge Tarmac Limited in advance of the extension of quarrying into Phase 2 of this permitted area.

A palaeochannel ran north to south along the western side of this area, continuing the alignment of this feature from its observed extents in the Phase 1 quarry area. A burnt mound of probable Bronze Age date was located on the east side of the channel. A Roman ditch extended along the length of the palaeochannel continuing from the Phase 1 area to the north.

The alluvial sequence consisted of a reddish-brown alluvium underlying the turfline. This overlaid a yellowish-brown alluvial deposit of prehistoric date, itself overlying a reddish-orange alluvial unit which directly overlaid the sand and gravel mineral deposit. In the area of the palaeochannel a thin peat rich deposit spread over a large extent in the lowest lying part of the site and this was sealed by a grey clay (stasis) horizon as well as the yellow alluvium.

Later features comprised a series of ditches and drains associated with a water-meadow system which has previously been mapped through aerial photography and LiDAR. Medieval and later field boundaries and land-drains were also recorded.

Report

1 Background

A programme of archaeological works (salvage recording) was undertaken within the Moreton South Extension of Wellington Quarry, Herefordshire (NGR SO 5030 4730) during the period July – September 2014. The work was completed on behalf of Lafarge Tarmac Limited in advance of the extension of quarrying into Phase 2 of this permitted area. Work in 2014 covered the first part of this phase of quarrying; Phase 2a.

The permitted extension is considered by the Archaeological Advisor to Herefordshire Council (the Curator) to have the potential to affect a known archaeological site (HSM 32268).

The project conforms to a brief prepared by Herefordshire Council (2012) and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (WA 2014) and approved by the Curator.

The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance for archaeological excavation* (IfA 2008) *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008), and the *Standards for archaeological projects in Herefordshire: issue 1* (Herefordshire Archaeology 2004).

The event reference for this project, given by the HER is EHE 2057.

2 Aims

It was anticipated that the permitted area (including Phase 2) had the potential to contain both prehistoric and Romano-British remains but that these were unlikely to be especially complex in nature. Their survival was expected for the most part to be poor, except potentially in the lowest lying areas and/or areas of deeper alluviation where preservation of remains was anticipated to be better. In such locations well-preserved palaeoenvironmental deposits associated with former watercourses were liable to be encountered.

The overall aims of the project are therefore as follows:

A1. To identify all archaeological remains present within the site and secure an accurate survey of them thus recording the scale and extent of archaeological remains present;

A2. To undertake carefully targeted investigation and recording of any landscape features (field boundaries, fence lines, etc) revealed to recover evidence for dating in order to support understanding of their chronological sequence and development;

A3. To undertake a sufficient level of investigation and recording of any occupation, activity focus and/or funerary deposits revealed to establish dating and character.

More specifically, the project is anticipated to address the following research themes:

- Neolithic and earlier prehistoric seasonal occupation;
- Bronze Age and Iron Age activity within the landscape (funerary monuments, burnt mounds, settlement and landuse);
- Romano-British water management features and field systems;
- Post-Roman environment and landscape;
- Medieval cultivation; and

- Long-term patterns of environmental change and human impact on the landscape (as reflected in the palaeoenvironmental and geoarchaeological record).

These will be considered within the context of both regional and national research frameworks and in particular the West Midlands Regional Research Framework (Watt 2011) as well as within the specific research frameworks developed through the ALSF for the Lower Lugg (Bapty 2007, 2008).

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The project was undertaken by Graham Arnold (BA MSc); who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2009 and has been practicing archaeology since 2002.

The Project Manager responsible for the quality of the project was Robin Jackson (BA, ACIfA). Comment on finds and environmental material was provided by Robin Jackson (BA, ACIfA) and Elizabeth Pearson (MSc, ACIfA). Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt (BA MCIfA).

3.2 Archaeological background

The archaeological background to the southern extension area at Wellington derives from extensive programmes of investigation undertaken at the quarry since 1986. These include two phases of evaluation of the Wellington Moreton South extension and the first phase (Phase 1) of archaeological mitigation (salvage recording) associated with this extension.

In summary, these indicate that the site lies within a broad area of high archaeological potential as has been demonstrated by a range of significant discoveries made in advance of previous stages of quarrying, through:

1. Programmes of salvage recording and excavation undertaken prior to quarrying between 1986-2005 in the original quarry area and the north and south extensions of that area (Jackson and Miller 2011; Jackson and Mann forthcoming);
2. A programme of evaluation undertaken at Morton Camp (which extended the quarry to the west) in 2003 and affecting the northern part of the Wellington South extension (Griffin and Jackson 2003);
3. Programmes of salvage recording and excavation undertaken at Moreton Camp between 2005-9 (Mann 2007a and b, 2010; Potten 2008); and
4. A programme of evaluation undertaken to the south of Moreton Camp in 2007-8 and covering the central and southern parts of the Wellington South extension (Sworn and Jackson 2009).

5 Most recently, mitigation work (salvage recording) has been completed (2012-14) within the first phase of the Moreton South Extension and this has identified Neolithic pits, waterholes and associated features of probable Bronze Age date, a Roman (or possibly earlier) palaeochannel, Roman and early post-Roman field drainage systems and a post-medieval water-meadow system (Arnold and Jackson 2015).

These programmes of investigation have revealed well-preserved archaeological, palaeoenvironmental and geoarchaeological deposits reflecting a long period of human exploitation of the floodplain and terraces of the River Lugg from the Mesolithic onwards and including significant Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman and early medieval remains.

All of the areas affected by the Wellington South workings can therefore be deemed to be of high archaeological potential since deposits relating to earlier and later prehistoric, Romano-British, post-Roman and medieval activity have been identified through the two programmes of evaluation across the area (Griffin and Jackson 2003; Sworn and Jackson 2008) and have been confirmed by the Phase 1 salvage recording (Arnold and Jackson 2015). These provide evidence of significant

prehistoric remains focussed alongside, and on gravel islands between, former watercourses (palaeochannels). Evidence of Roman and early medieval activity has also been identified and the whole area can be determined as of high archaeological potential with further remains anticipated to extend into the Phase 2 area and beyond.

3.3 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2014).

Fieldwork was undertaken in a single block spanning the period 28th July 2014 to 4th September 2014. This was while the weather stayed workable, with occasional delays due to flooding of the area.

The WA project number is P3979 and the site code is HER EHE 2057.

Phase 2a of the quarry extension amounted to just over 2.4 hectares, including 0.2 hectares for the access haul road as indicated in Figure 2. Land use prior to commencement was as rough pasture.

Topsoil stripping and overburden removal followed the routines that have been established during earlier phases of work at Wellington. These allow for the on-site archaeologist to determine the levels to which overburden can be removed in order to target archaeological or palaeoenvironmental horizons as required. They also vary according to the nature of the overburden and, in particular, according to the presence or absence of clearly defined alluvial units. Three such units have been identified across wide areas of the quarry: Unit 1, a strong reddish-brown alluvium (uppermost), Unit 2, a yellowish-brown alluvium (middle) and a further reddish brown alluvium, Unit 3, which is often mixed with gravel (lowest). This sequence has been shown to be deepest and best defined within topographically low lying areas of the quarry, whilst higher areas have often been proven to lack certain elements of the sequence (notably Units 2 and 3).

Topsoil, subsoil and alluvial deposits were stripped from the area using a 360º tracked excavator, employing a toothless bucket operating under archaeological supervision. This stripping operation was undertaken in several stages. Topsoil, subsoil and any modern material were initially stripped to the top of the first alluvial horizon (Unit 1). This interface has been shown to be that at which medieval and later deposits are revealed. Following recording (see below), further excavation was undertaken to remove the alluvial overburden overlying the mineral. The latter was removed in two blocks; initially the reddish-brown alluvial unit (Unit 1; which survived to a depth of 0.20 – 0.60m across this area) was removed to the interface with the underlying alluvium (Unit 2). This has been shown to be the interface at which palaeochannels and early medieval, Roman and earlier deposits are present and this was the case again here. Lastly the remaining alluvium (Unit 2, the yellowish-brown alluvium and Unit 3, which here comprised a rather orange coloured deposit) and organic fills of the palaeochannels were removed to expose mineral deposits ready for extraction.

Clean surfaces were inspected at each interface and archaeological deposits revealed were mapped using a Leica NetRover. Selected deposits were then hand-excavated to retrieve artefactual material and environmental samples, as well as to determine their nature. All investigation and recording was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012).

As in previous years, the communication and good working relationship between the archaeologists, Lafarge Tarmac staff and the plant contractors was crucial to the success of the work. The co-operation and skill of the plant operators remained and, as in previous years, was an essential element in the successful machining of selected areas, allowing targeted sampling and recording.

3.4 Artefact methodology, by Robin Jackson

3.4.1 Artefact recovery policy

The artefact recovery policy conformed to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012).

3.4.1 Method of analysis

Only hand-collected animal bone was recovered during this phase of fieldwork. This was washed, marked and appropriately packaged following preliminary quantification (by weight and count). Information was recorded on a project database.

3.5 Environmental archaeology methodology, by Elizabeth Pearson

3.5.1 Sampling policy

Sampling was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). Samples were taken by the excavator from deposits considered to be of high potential for the recovery of environmental remains. A total of 4 samples (of 40 litres) were taken during this phase of investigation (Table 1).

Sample	Context	Volume	Volume processed	Reason for sample/comment
200	2005	40	N/A	Molluscs. Sample stored for assessment
201	2030	40	40	Bulk sample. Plant macros, dating and finds
202	2030	40	40	Bulk sample. Plant macros, dating and finds
203	2030	40	40	Bulk sample. Plant macros, dating and finds

Table 1: Environmental samples

3.5.2 Processing and analysis

Work completed to date has focussed on the processing of three bulk samples taken from the south-west, east and north-west corners of a burnt mound (see Table 1) in order to inform this interim statement and support determination at a later stage (assessment) of the project which samples will warrant further analysis and reporting.

For each of the bulk samples, 40 litres were processed by flotation using a Siraf tank. The flots were collected on a 300mm sieve and the residue retained on a 1mm mesh. This allows for the recovery of items such as small animal bones, molluscs and seeds.

The residues were scanned by eye and the abundance of each category of environmental remains estimated. The flots were scanned using a low power MEIJI stereo light microscope and plant remains identified using modern reference collections maintained by Worcestershire Archaeology, and a seed identification manual (Cappers *et al* 2006). Nomenclature for the plant remains follows the New Flora of the British Isles, 3rd edition (Stace 2010).

The remaining sample was taken for the recovery of mollusc remains and has been retained for processing and assessment.

3.5.3 Discard policy

Samples will be retained for up to 6 months following the completion of the assessment report when decisions on further processing and radiocarbon dating will be made. Samples can be retained for a longer period of time in consultation with Worcestershire Archaeology

4 Summary of results

All records have been checked and cross-referenced. Phasing at this stage is preliminary and is based upon ecofactual evidence allied to stratigraphic information. With the exception of animal bone no hand collected material was recovered during this phase of fieldwork. A database containing all site data and environmental information to date has also been established.

The following summary description of the site sequence is structured around type and broad period of activity. A summary plan of key features and deposits is presented as Figure 2. Five phases of activity were identified.

4.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits

Natural deposits comprised sand and gravel, overlain by a series of alluvial horizons. Across this area the alluvial sequence was (from the base) as follows:

Overlying the sand and gravel was a mixed reddish-orange alluvium (Unit 3). This was sealed by a yellowish-brown alluvium (Unit 2) which was deposited throughout much of the prehistoric period, and this was overlaid in turn by a later reddish-brown alluvium (Unit 1) which was deposited from the early medieval period onwards. This was overlaid by a thin modern topsoil and turf.

A palaeochannel was recorded incised into the yellowish-brown alluvium (Unit 2) running north to south through the western side of the investigated area and continuing the previously identified route of this feature from the Phase 1 area. In the area of the palaeochannel a thin peat rich deposit extended to either side over a large area; this deposit is known from the evaluation to date from the early medieval period and to be very extensively spread across the lowest lying part of the site either side of the palaeochannel. This peat rich deposit was sealed by a grey clay (stasis) horizon which separated the Unit 1 (red) and Unit 2 (yellow) alluvium in this part of the site.

4.2 Phase 2: Bronze Age deposits

A burnt mound (2030) measuring 7.50m across and between 0.05 and 0.10m in depth was recorded on the eastern side of the palaeochannel. This comprised abundant fire-cracked stone and charcoal. Three separate areas were sampled, each retrieving 40l of material for dating and environmental analysis. No finds were present.

4.3 Phase 4: Roman deposits

A drainage ditch (2006) was cut into the uppermost fills of the palaeochannel and followed the course of this feature. This had been recorded to the north during the Phase 1 salvage recording and is known from radiocarbon dating undertaken during the evaluation to be of Late Romano-British to early post-Roman date.

4.4 Phase 5: Post-medieval / modern deposits

A series of narrow ditches ran east to west across the site. These also largely survive as shallow earthworks visible within the modern landscape and have been recorded through LiDAR survey and aerial photography during previous stages of work at Wellington. Across Phase 2b (as elsewhere), they were revealed to be largely backfilled with the red alluvial clay (Unit 2). They represent the surviving remains of a post-medieval water-meadow system.

The continuation of a modern field boundary was recorded in the south-east part of the investigated area. This was filled with peaty organic material and gleyed blue grey clay due to waterlogging. A modern ceramic land drain and brick chamber was also recorded in the centre of the site, with the drain running north-west to south-east.

4.5 Environmental summary, by Elizabeth Pearson

The environmental evidence recovered is summarised in Tables 1 and 2.

Five fragments of animal bone weighing 0.682kg were recovered from the palaeochannel.

Preservation of environmental remains from the burnt mound (2030) was poor. Although charcoal was moderately abundant in one sample from the burnt mound (<203>), it was generally too fragmented to allow identification, and is, therefore, not suitable for analysis or for providing material for radiocarbon dating. Uncharred plant remains were abundant in these samples, but consisted largely of unidentifiable root fragments, and are likely to be intrusive. Burnt, heat-cracked stone was abundant in all three samples, as would be expected from a burnt mound feature.

No further work is recommended on these samples or the hand-collected animal bone.

5 Discussion

The salvage recording undertaken in 2014 in the Phase 2a extension has again demonstrated the potential of this area to produce evidence for human exploitation of the Lugg terraces and floodplain since the prehistoric period. This is accompanied by evidence for environmental and landscape change provided by sequences of alluvium and well-preserved organic deposits occupying palaeochannels and surviving within deeper archaeological features such as waterholes and large drainage ditches.

The results of the monitoring of Phase 2 extend those resulting from the 2008 Evaluation (Sworn and Jackson 2009) and the salvage recording completed in Phase 1 (Arnold and Jackson 2015).

Of particular note was the recording of a burnt mound. Waterholes, pits and a possible trough associated with large quantities of fire-cracked stone had been recorded in the Phase 1 area and were suggested as possibly relating to burnt mound type activities, however, no evidence of associated mounds was present (Arnold and Jackson 2015). In Phase 2 only a mound was identified and no associated features and it is possible that different activities are represented to those in Phase 1, although both were associated with large volumes of charcoal and fire-cracked stone. An increasingly more constant human presence has been indicated across the Lugg Valley at Wellington from the Bronze Age onwards and has been evidenced during previous stages of fieldwork by the construction of small structures, burial monuments and burnt mound activities and, by the Iron Age and into the Roman period, the establishment of field systems. The Phase 2 evidence therefore extends this pattern of activity and, although undated, is liable to be of Bronze Age date.

The area was a floodplain during the Roman period and evidence of its use for agricultural purposes is represented by the drainage ditch running north to south across the area following the line of the abandoned (silted up) palaeochannel. The presence of this ditch may reflect an attempt to improve drainage of what must have been very wet land along the route of this former watercourse. Radiocarbon dating of the organic fills of this ditch and also of the thin band of peat rich material extending widely to either side indicate that attempts to maintain drainage either failed or were abandoned sometime during the early post-Roman period and that widespread flooding of the area must have occurred.

These phases of earlier activity are all cut through, or seal, an alluvial horizon (Unit 2) and are sealed by a further alluvial deposit (Unit 1) which is understood to have been deposited from the 9th-10^{h} century AD onwards.

Later careful management of the landscape is evidenced by the extensive water-meadow system established in the late 18th or early 19th century, and surviving as a series of ditches backfilled with fine clay silt deposits that are very similar to Unit 1, suggesting that the deposition of this alluvial unit continued until at least the post-medieval to the early modern period. These features remain visible as slight surviving earthworks and have been recorded on a LiDAR survey carried out as part of the evaluation for this quarry extension (Sworn and Jackson 2009).

6 The archive

The fieldwork archive (Appendix 2) has been collated, checked and cross-referenced.

Preliminary processing of environmental samples has been undertaken and material is now packaged appropriately for storage prior to assessment and analysis.

A project database has been established and preliminary structural, artefactual and environmental data has been entered.

The resultant fieldwork archive has been placed into temporary storage at WA's offices with assessment and analysis of deposits within the Moreton South extension proposed following completion of further phases, leading eventually to production of a further publication on this highly important site.

Following the completion of the project, it is intended that the archive will be deposited with the Herefordshire Heritage Service.

7 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, the Lafarge Tarmac Ltd staff at Wellington Quarry and especially John Sparrow (Quarry Managers) and Nick Atkins (Estates Manager); and Julian Cotton Herefordshire Archaeology Planning Advisor.

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Appendix 1: Technical information

The archive (site code: EHE 2057 - Phase 2a)

The archive consists of:

31	Context records AS1
6	Field progress reports AS2
2	Photographic records AS3
113	Digital photographs
1	Drawing number catalogues AS4
4	Scale drawings
1	Context number catalogues AS5
1	Sample records AS17
1	Sample number catalogues AS18
1	Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Hereford City Museum and Art Gallery
Broad Street
Hereford
HR4 9RU

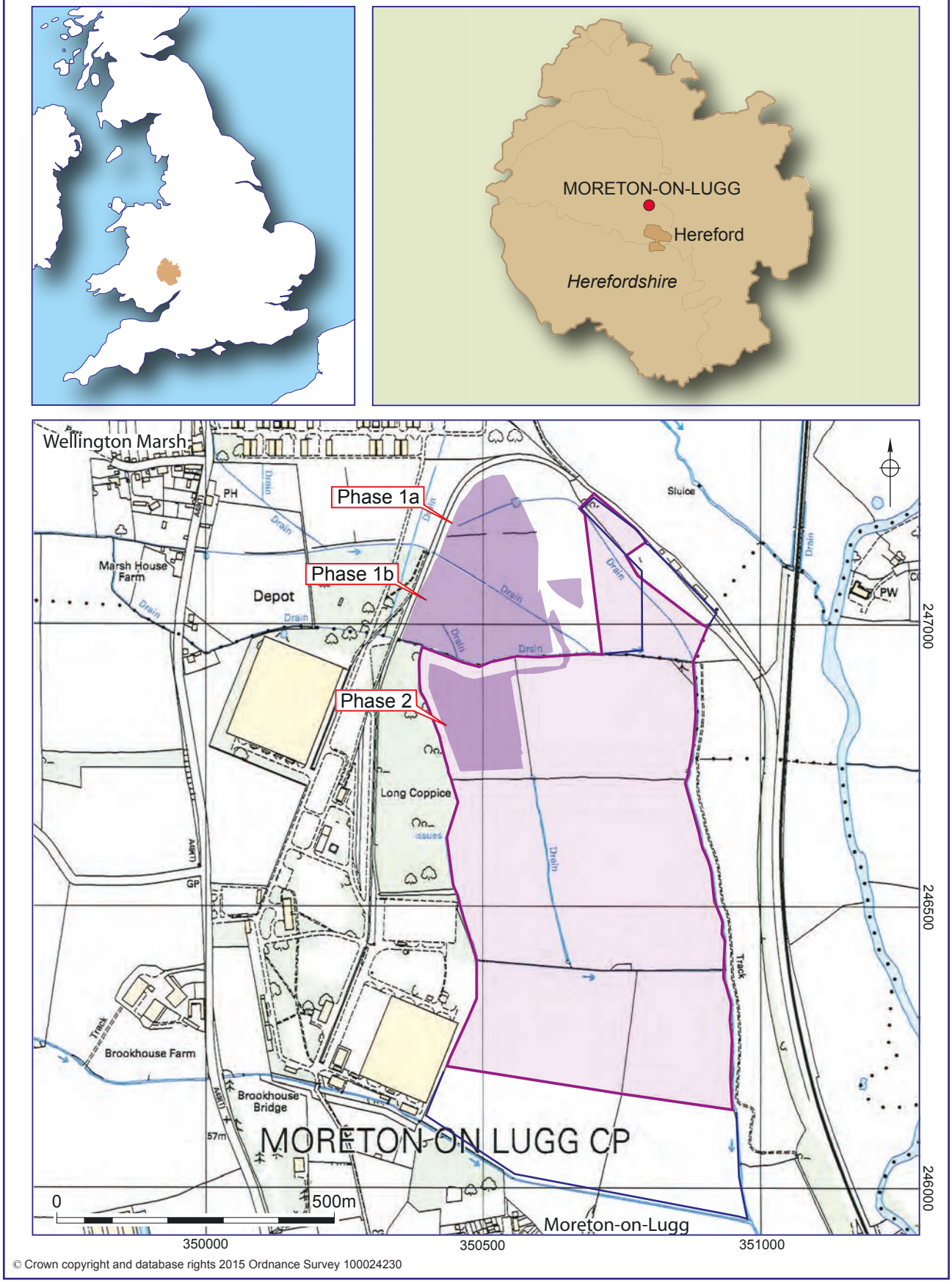
Tel. Hereford (01432) 268121 extension 207/334

Summary of data for Herefordshire SMR

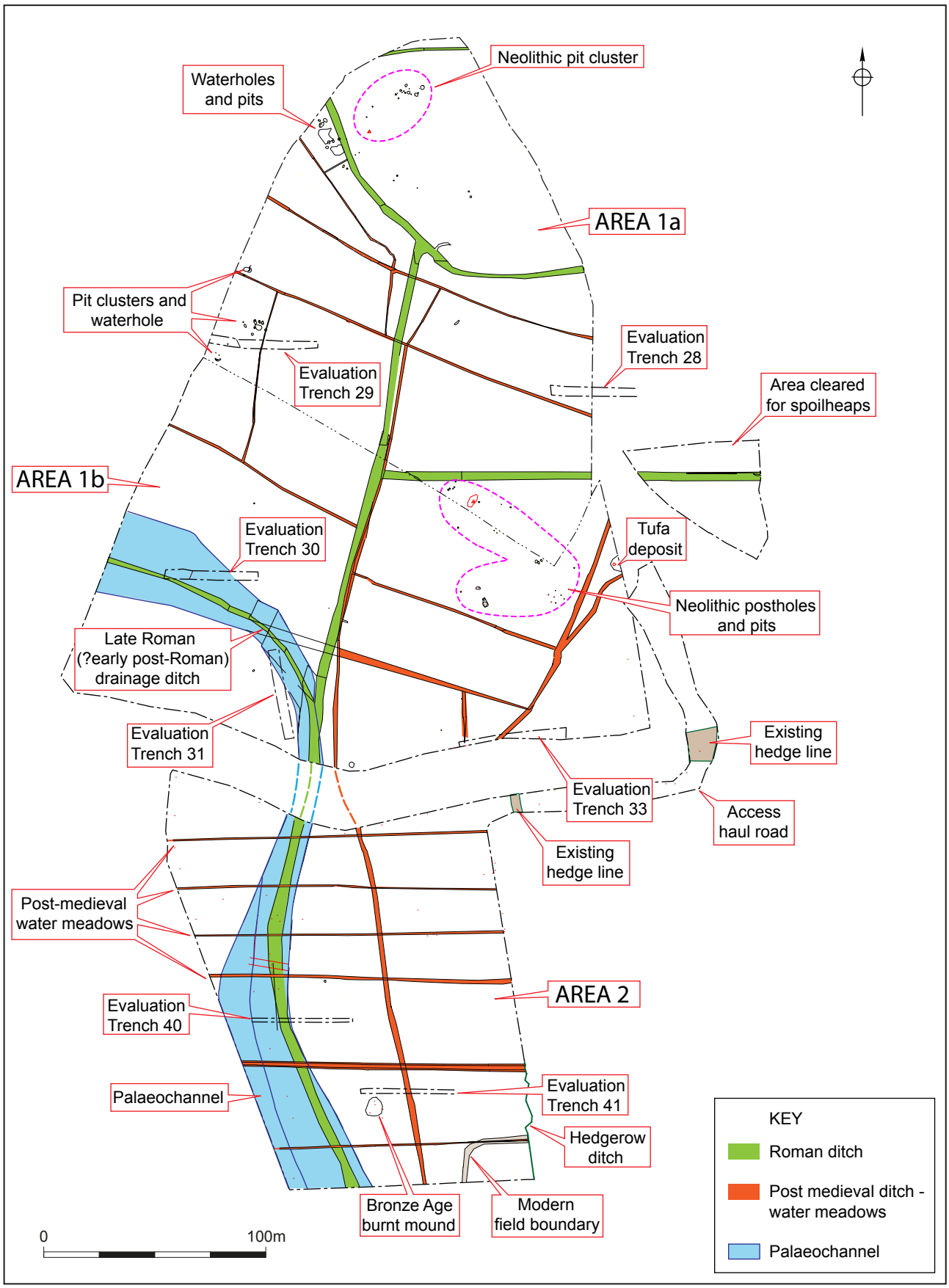
Report name and title	Arnold, G and Jackson, R, 2015 Archaeological Salvage Recording at Wellington Quarry, Herefordshire 2012-14. Moreton South Extension: Phase 2a Interim Report Worcestershire Archaeology internal report 2171
Contractor's name and address	Lafarge Tarmac Limited, Central and Wales, Croxden Common, Freehay, Cheadle, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST10 1RH
Site name	Wellington Quarry: Moreton South Extension
Grid Reference (8 fig)	NGR SO 5030 4730 | **Planning Application Number**
SMR number/s of site	EHE 2057
Date of fieldwork	2014
Date of report	30-03-2015
	Number and type of finds
Pottery	**Period** **Number of sherds** Nil
Other finds	Nil **Period** **Quantity**
	Number and type of samples collected
Sieving for charred plant remains	Number of features sampled: Number of buckets: 16 (160 litres)
C14/scientific dates	Number and type: N/A Result:
Pollen	No of columns/spot samples: N/A Name of pollen specialist
Bone	Number of buckets sieved for bone N/A *Quantity recovered* *Period* 5 fragments weighing 0.682kg Late Roman/early medieval?
Insect	No of columns/spot samples N/A Name of specialist
Other	Type and specialist N/A
Summary of the report	*A programme of archaeological works (salvage recording) was undertaken within the Moreton South Extension of Wellington*

	Quarry, Herefordshire (NGR SO 5030 4730) during the period July – September 2014. The work was completed on behalf of Lafarge Tarmac Limited in advance of the extension of quarrying into Phase 2 of this permitted area. *A palaeochannel ran north to south along the western side of this area, continuing the alignment of this feature from its observed extents in the Phase 1 quarry area. A burnt mound of probable Bronze Age date was located on the east side of the channel. A Roman ditch extended along the length of the palaeochannel continuing from the Phase 1 area to the north.* *The alluvial sequence consisted of a reddish-brown alluvium underlying the turfline. This overlaid a yellowish-brown alluvial deposit of prehistoric date, itself overlying a reddish-orange alluvial unit which directly overlaid the sand and gravel mineral deposit. In the area of the palaeochannel a thin peat rich deposit spread over a large extent in the lowest lying part of the site and this was sealed by a grey clay (stasis) horizon as well as the yellow alluvium.* *Later features comprised a series of ditches and drains associated with a water-meadow system which has previously been mapped through aerial photography and LiDAR. Medieval and later field boundaries and land-drains were also recorded.*

Figures



Location of the site *Figure 1*



Phase 2b

Figure 2

Plates

Plate 1: View of site before works commenced

Plate 2: Haul road access after site strip, no significant archaeology

Plate 3: Palaeochannel 2005, view west

Plate 4: Peat deposit within palaeochannel, looking north

Plate 5: Slot through peat deposit, looking north-west

Plate 6: Modern brick chamber for ceramic land-drain in centre of field

Plate 7: Burnt mound 2030, looking north

Plate 8: East facing section through burnt mound 2030

Plate 9: Roman drainage ditch

Plate 10: South-facing section of Roman drainage ditch

Plate 11: Southern water-meadow ditch remnant, view east

Plate 12: Northern water-meadow ditch remnant, view west