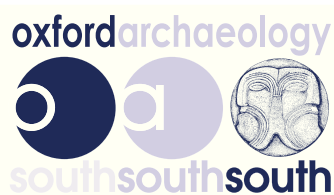


The Old Railway Halt Scrapyard Great Rollright West Oxfordshire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



May 2011

Client: J.T. Aldridge and J. Aldridge


Issue No: 1

OA Job No: 4968

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The Old Railway Halt Scrapyard, Great Rollright, West Oxfordshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Written by Mike Sims

Illustrated by Julia Collins

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Summary

On 13th April 2011 Oxford Archaeology undertook an archaeological watching brief on the site of a proposed new vehicle dismantling building at the Old Railway Halt Scrapyard, Great Rollright, West Oxfordshire (NGR: SP 3272 3035). The watching brief revealed evidence that the terracing of the site for the Banbury to Kingham Junction railway had truncated the majority of the area of the development site. A small 3 m wide strip of undisturbed ground was cut back but no archaeology was observed. Demolition debris consistent with a lime kiln was observed to the immediate north-east of the site but no evidence for its original location was encountered.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA), was commissioned by Mr Carl A. Middleditch on behalf of J.T. Aldridge and J. Aldridge to undertake a watching brief on the site of a proposed building for vehicle de-pollution and re-sorting of scrap metal.
- 1.1.2 The work is being undertaken as a condition of Planning Permission (planning ref: MW.0143/10 - 10/1448/P/CD3). A brief was set by Hugh Coddington (Acting County Archaeologist) detailing the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary to discharge the planning condition (OCAS, 2011). This is in accordance with local and national planning policies, specifically Planning Policy Statement 5.
- 1.1.3 OA produced a Written Statement of Investigation (WSI) showing how it would meet these requirements (OA, 2011).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The village of Great Rollright is located approximately 7 km north-east of the market town of Chipping Norton (Fig. 1). The development site is situated 750 m south of the village on the site of the old Great Rollright Halt on the former Banbury to Kingham Junction railway line. The development area is level ground at a height of approximately 178 m aOD, formed by a terrace cut into a spur of the hillside during the construction of the railway. The site is currently used for vehicle dismantling and storage.
- 1.2.2 The underlying geology is Great Oolite Limestone (Geological Survey of Great Britain, sheet no 218).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

(Reproduced from the brief)

- 1.3.1 There are no known sites of archaeological interest within the development area but two cropmarks have been identified close to the site.
- 1.3.2 The first, an enclosure with internal divisions has been noted just to the north of the site, while the second, a small villa to the west has been identified and confirmed by the English Heritage Aerial Photographic Unit.
- 1.3.3 The development site itself is located on the site of the former Great Rollright Halt on the Banbury to Kingham Junction railway line which opened in 1881.



2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The aims of the watching brief were to:

- Preserve by record any archaeological deposits encountered during the course of ground intrusions;
- Seek to establish the nature and date of any archaeological deposits encountered;
- To secure the analysis, conservation and long-term storage of any artefactual/ecofactual material recovered from the site;
- To disseminate results through the production of a grey literature report.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The watching brief observed any groundworks which had the possibility of disturbing or destroying potential archaeological deposits. These works included the stripping and levelling of the building's footprint and the excavation of 10 pits for foundation pads.

2.2.2 Excavation of archaeological features was undertaken to fulfil the basic objective of retrieval of archaeological data affected by the works.

2.2.3 All features and deposits were issued with unique context numbers, and context recording will be in accordance with the established OA Field Manual (OAU 1992). All contexts, and any small finds and samples from them were allocated unique numbers. Bulk finds were collected by context. Colour digital photographs and black-and-white negative photographs were taken of all trenches and archaeological features. A general photographic record of the works was also made.

2.2.4 Site plans were drawn at an appropriate scale (normally 1:50 or 1:100) with larger scale plans of features as necessary. Section drawings of features and sample sections of trenches were drawn at a scale of 1:20.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

3.1.1 An area measuring 21 m east-west and 13 m north-south was stripped and levelled by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless grading bucket. The majority of the site was within the trackbed of the old railway yard and required little machining but a 3 m wide strip was excavated along the northern edge of the development area adjacent to the trackway leading to the sewage works (Fig. 1). This strip originally formed the base of the cutting along the northern edge of the railway bed.

3.1.2 Within the northern half of the building footprint the underlying tabulated limestone natural (4) was exposed (Fig. 2, Sections 1 and 2). This deposit tipped southwards following the original contour of the site. Overlying this was a layer of weathered and frost shattered limestone (3) measuring up to 0.4 m in depth.

3.1.3 Within the area of the old railway yard, currently in use as a scrapyards, the bedrock (4) and the weathered limestone (3) was directly overlain by a 0.18 m deep layer of dark grey crushed stone and slag (5) (Fig. 2, Section 3) forming the working surface of the yard.



- 3.1.4 Along the northern edge a 3 m wide strip of undisturbed ground was excavated down to the level of the bedrock. Within this strip a layer of reddish brown clay silt (2) measuring up to 0.4 m in depth was observed overlying layer 3. This was overlaid by a layer of dark grey-brown clay silt (1) containing many fragments of worked and burnt stone and modern artefacts.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 Only layers 1 and 5 produced dating evidence. This included modern iron objects, glass and plastic. The presence of these was recorded but they were not retained. No dating evidence earlier than the late 19th or 20th century was observed.

3.3 Environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The investigation showed that the majority of the site had been previously truncated, most likely during the construction of the Banbury to Kingham Junction railway, with no occupation or colluvial layers surviving. Later dismantling of the railway line left the ballast in situ forming the base for the current yard's surface (5).
- 4.1.2 No evidence for deep features such as postholes or pits were observed within either the bedrock or the weathered limestone. It is possible that these may have been truncated when the bedrock was excavated (by the railway) but the absence of residual finds within the ploughsoil and of cut features within the surviving weathered limestone would suggest that there has been little or no archaeological activity within the development area.
- 4.1.3 Layer 2 exposed along the northern edge of the building footprint, is a layer of probable colluvium. Layer 1 is a layer of ploughsoil which has been heavily disturbed by later activity on the site including the construction of an access road leading to the sewage works immediately north-east of the site. It is probable that the worked and burnt stone noted within layer 1 has been imported to form the base of this road.
- 4.1.4 Further examples of worked stone, burnt and vitrified stone and slag were observed on the surface of layer 1 adjacent to the development area. This material is consistent with material produced during the demolition of a lime kiln. No evidence for the siting of a kiln within the development area was observed but a residence named "Lime Kiln House" and a quarry 450 m to the west of the site suggests that lime burning has occurred locally. It is possible that the demolition of this kiln produced the debris noted.

**APPENDIX A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY**

Context	Type	Depth	Width	Comments	Finds	Date
1	Layer	Up to 0.4 m	3 m	Ploughsoil	Worked stone, iron, plastic, glass	C19th - C20th
2	Layer	0.3 m	3 m	Colluvium	-	-
3	Layer	Up to 0.5 m	13 m +	Weathered limestone	-	-
4	Layer	> 0.5 m	13 m +	Limestone bedrock	-	-
5	Layer	0.18 m	> 13 m	Present day scrapyard surface	Iron, glass, plastic	C20th



APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

- Communities and Local Government, 2010 *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning and the Historic Environment*
- OA, 2011 *Old Railway Halt, Great Rollright: Written Scheme of Investigation*
- OAU, 1992 *Field Manual (1st Edition, edited Wilkinson D)*
- OCAS, 2011 *Old Railway Halt, Great Rollright: Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief*



APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	The Old Railway Halt Scrapyard, Great Rollright, West Oxfordshire
Site code:	GRAIL 11
Grid reference:	Centred at NGR SP 3272 3035
Type of watching brief:	Excavation of base for new building
Date and duration of project:	13 th April 2011, one day
Area of site:	Approximately 200 m ²
Summary of results:	The watching brief observed evidence that the terracing of the site for the Banbury to Kingham Junction railway had truncated the majority of the area of the development site. A small 3 m wide strip of the cutting side was cut back but no archaeology was observed. Demolition debris consistent with a lime kiln was observed to the immediate north-east of the site but no evidence for its original location was encountered.
Location of archive:	Oxfordshire County Museum Service under the accession number OXCMS:2011.6

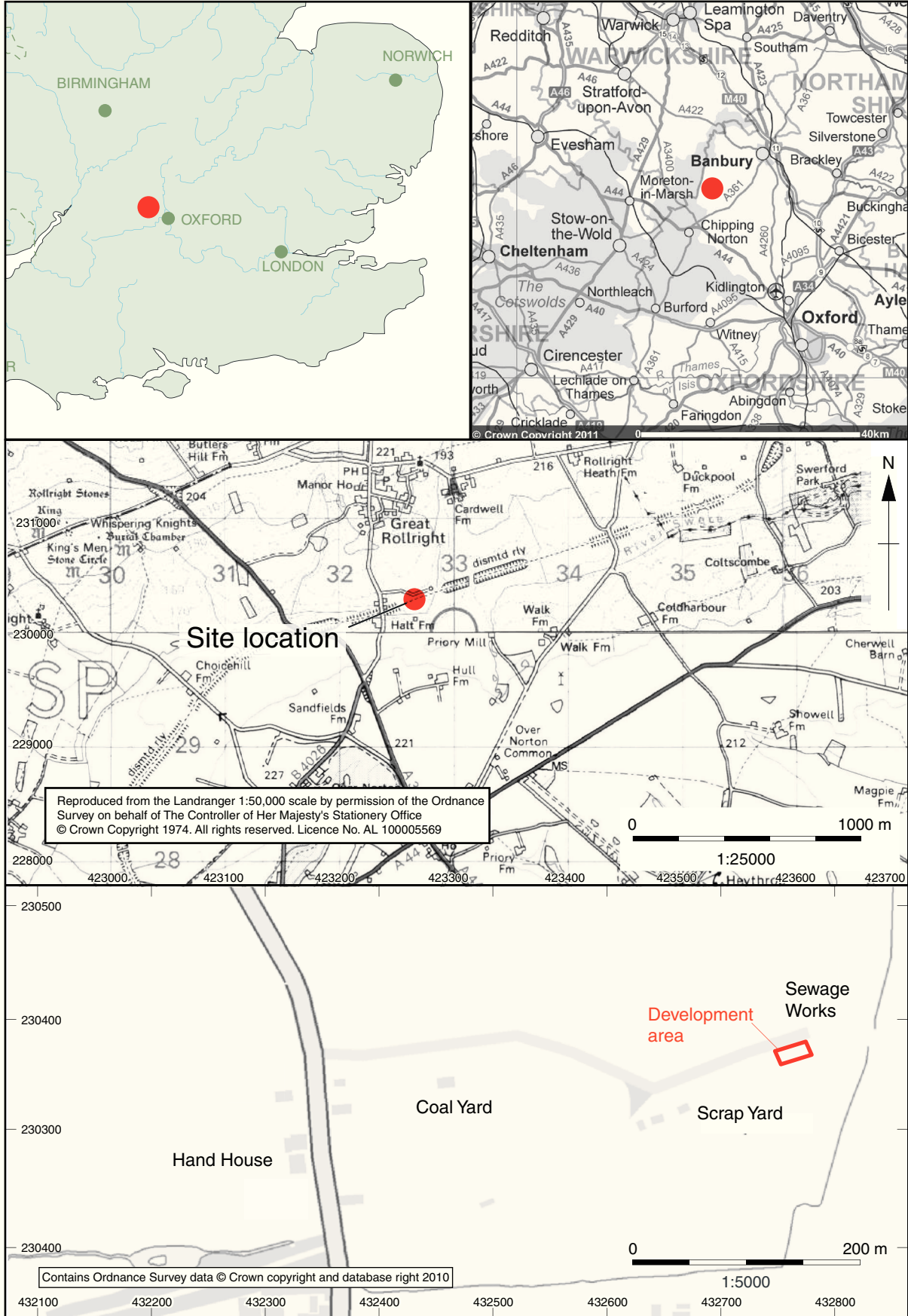
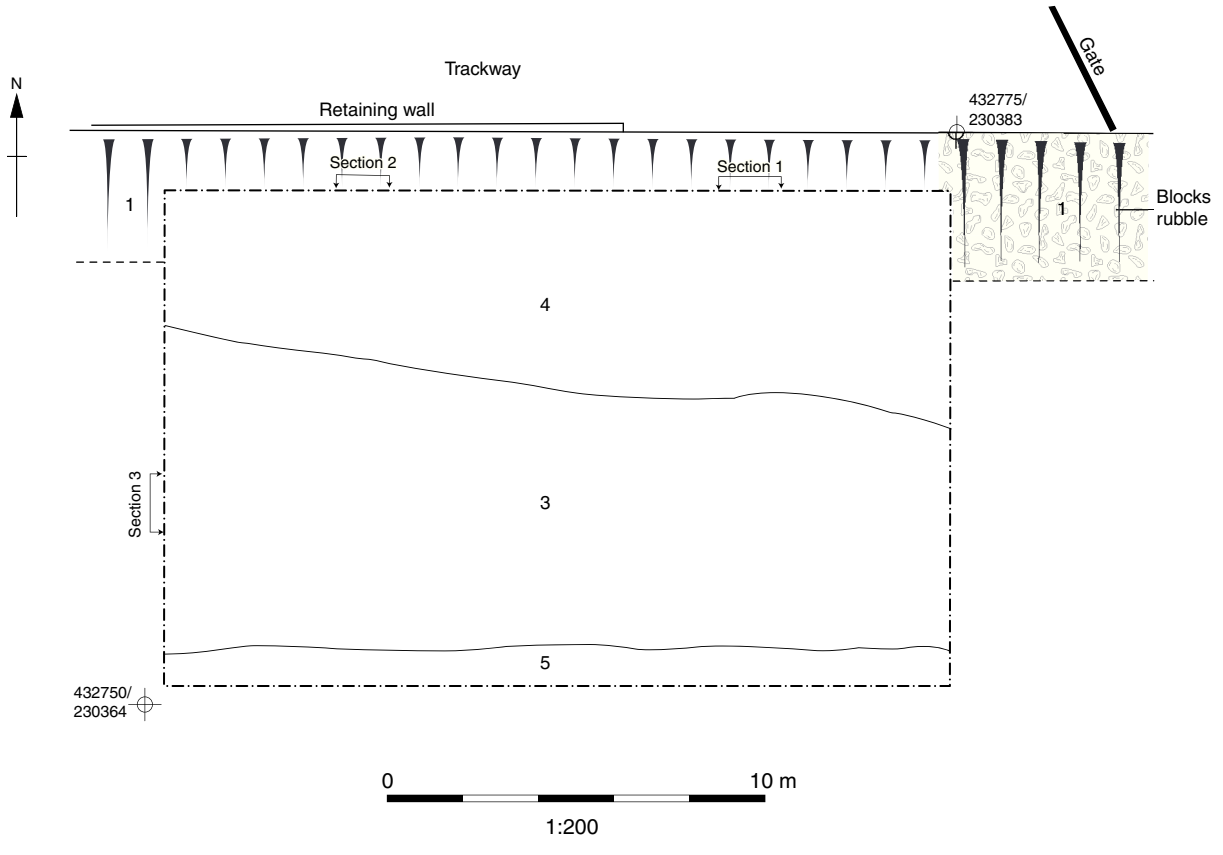
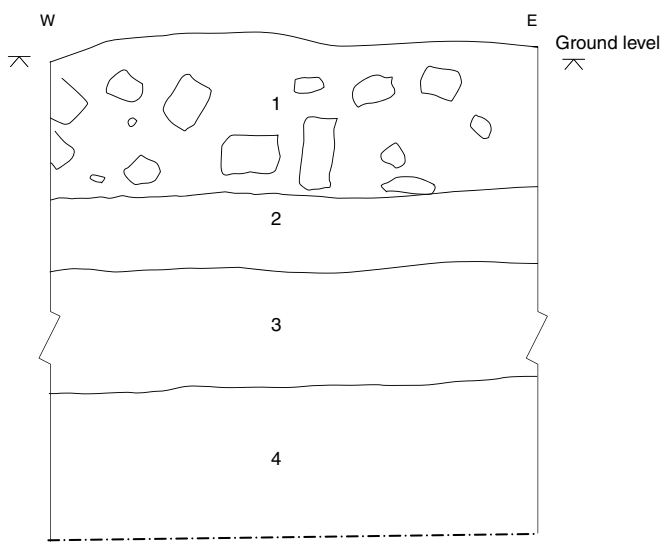


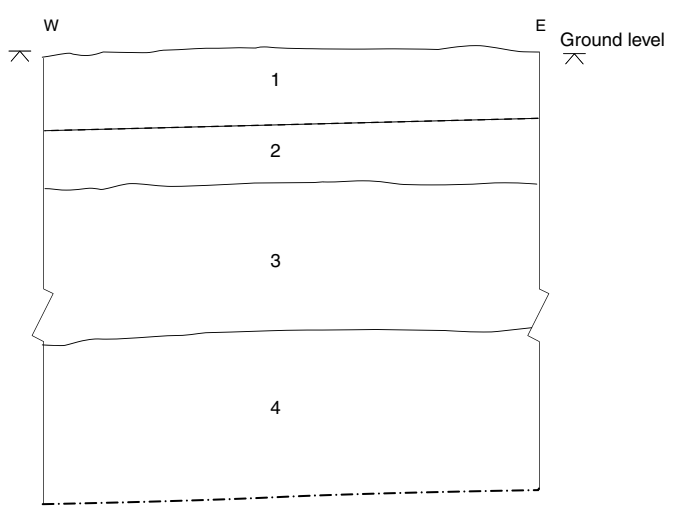
Figure 1: Site location



Section 1



Section 2



Section 3

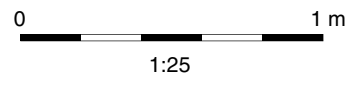
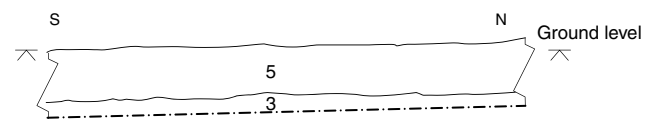


Figure 2: Plan and sections



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