

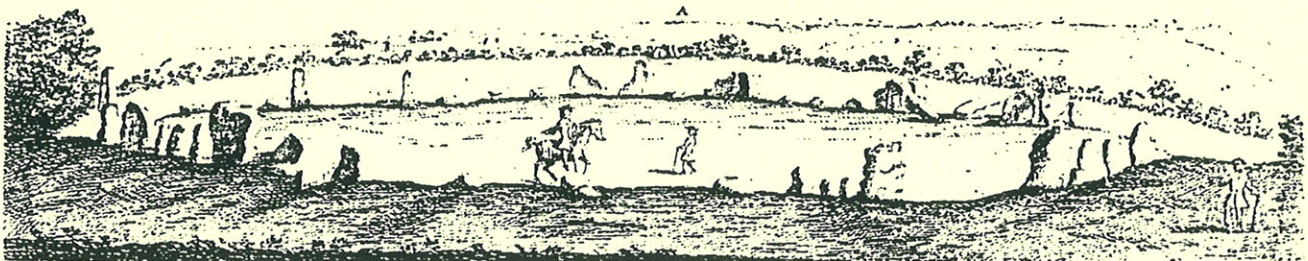
MKI

LITTLE ROLLRIGHT, MANOR FARM, OXON

NGR SP 3048 3120

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Planning Ref. No. W97/1233



Oxford Archaeological Unit

MARCH 1998

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NGR SP 3048 3120

Prepared by: Charlie Newman

Date: 18 March 1998

Checked by:

Anne Dodd

Date: 20/3/98

Approved by:

SC Pal

Date: 20/3/98

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

March 1998

Summary

In March 1998 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook a watching brief at Little Rollright (NGR SP 3048 3120). No features or finds of archaeological significance were located.

1 Introduction

The development proposal (W97/1233) comprised the erection of a telecommunications mast, other ancillary antennae, an equipment cabin and temporary service access.

The watching brief was commissioned by MKI due to the presence of known sites of archaeological interest in the immediate vicinity. It was undertaken to a brief set by Hugh Coddington, Deputy County Archaeological Officer.

2 Archaeological Background

The archaeology of the Rollright area has been the subject of a study commissioned by English Heritage (formerly HBMC) (Lambrick 1988). These results are summarised below.

The Rollright Stones (Fig. 1) are located approximately 1 km to the west of the development site (NGR SP 2995 3085) and represent the remains of three megalithic monuments, the Whispering Knights, the King's Men and the King Stone. The survey and excavation carried out by Lambrick (1988) revealed other sites in near proximity.

The Whispering Knights are thought to be a free-standing portal dolmen, part of a number of tombs in the area which consist of simple monumental chambers and small primitive cairns dating to the early-middle Neolithic. The King's Men is a late Neolithic or early Bronze Age stone circle. The King Stone, a single standing stone is of uncertain date, but is tentatively interpreted as a cemetery marker on the basis of nearby Bronze Age barrows and cremations (Lambrick 1988, 115, 136).

Other archaeological evidence in the vicinity comprises an early Iron Age trackway and field boundary (SP 2982 3090); Iron Age settlement (SP 2970 3100); Roman cultivation and settlement (SP 2910 3090) and a Saxon cemetery (SP 2980 3100).

As part of the research conducted in 1981, Lambrick undertook an extensive geophysical survey and fieldwalking for the purpose of collecting surface finds. Although the survey did not extend into the field of the new telecommunications mast it is thought that archaeological activity could extend along the ridgeway to the development site.

3 Location

The development site is located on the south western side of the junction between the A3400 and the road westwards towards the Rollright Stones and Stowe and eastwards to Great Rollright (NGR SP 3048 3120). The site lies on Oolitic limestone geology at 698 m OD. The site is situated on a north facing slope of farmland, currently a ploughed field.

4 Aims

The aims of the watching brief were to record any archaeological remains exposed on site during the course of the works to established standards (Wilkinson, 1992) and to secure the preservation by record of any archaeology, the presence and nature of which could not be established in advance.

5 Methodology

The watching brief was maintained during the period of groundworks, including the levelling of the area, the excavation of foundations and service trenches and the construction of the temporary access route.

All excavation was carried out by a 360° digger using a toothless bucket, under the supervision of an archaeologist from the Oxford Archaeological Unit.

Within the constraints imposed by Health and Safety considerations the deposits exposed were cleaned, inspected and recorded in plan, section and by colour slide and black and white print photography. Written records were also made on proforma sheets. Soil descriptions use estimated percentages based on the use of standard charts for approximation of percentage of inclusion types in soil deposits.

6 Results (Fig. 2)

A temporary access route (3.0 m wide) was constructed next to the hedgeline to allow works vehicle to enter the site.

A small compound area was stripped to allow the construction of a small cabin and an electricity meter cabinet, which are to be built on a concrete base. Within the compound a trench forming the foundation of the telecommunications tower was excavated to a depth of 1.20 m. This trench measured 3.50 m by 3.50 m and cut into the natural limestone. Unfortunately no exact Ordinance Datum value was available at this site, but O.S. contour lines indicate that the ground surface is approximately 698 m OD.

At approximately 697.50 m OD the natural Oolitic limestone (Layer 3) was encountered while excavating the foundation of the telecommunications tower. Excavation continued a further 0.50 m into the natural limestone which was seen to be sloping from the south to north.

Overlying the natural was a red-brown clayey-silt subsoil (Layer 2). This was seen throughout the compound area and contained no finds. This layer also sloped south-north but to a lesser extent.

A reddish-brown silty-loam ploughsoil (Layer 1) was found overlying the subsoil. The ploughsoil was 0.22 m in depth and is formed by colluvial hillwash banking up against a hedgeline. No finds were located within this layer.

No finds or archaeological features were located within the compound area. The construction of the temporary trackway disturbed only the upper 0.10 m of the ploughsoil, and no features were located.

7 Finds

No finds were retrieved during the watching brief.

8 Discussion

The construction of the telecommunications tower and compound did not disturb any archaeological features or deposits. However the proposed construction of a service trench from Brighthill Farm to the tower may encounter ancient field systems (cf. Lambrick 1988).

References.

- Lambrick, G 1988 *The Rollright Stones. Megaliths, monuments, and settlement in the prehistoric landscape.* English Heritage.
- Wilkinson, D 1992 *Oxford Archaeological Unit Field Manual, (First edition, (ed) August 1992).*

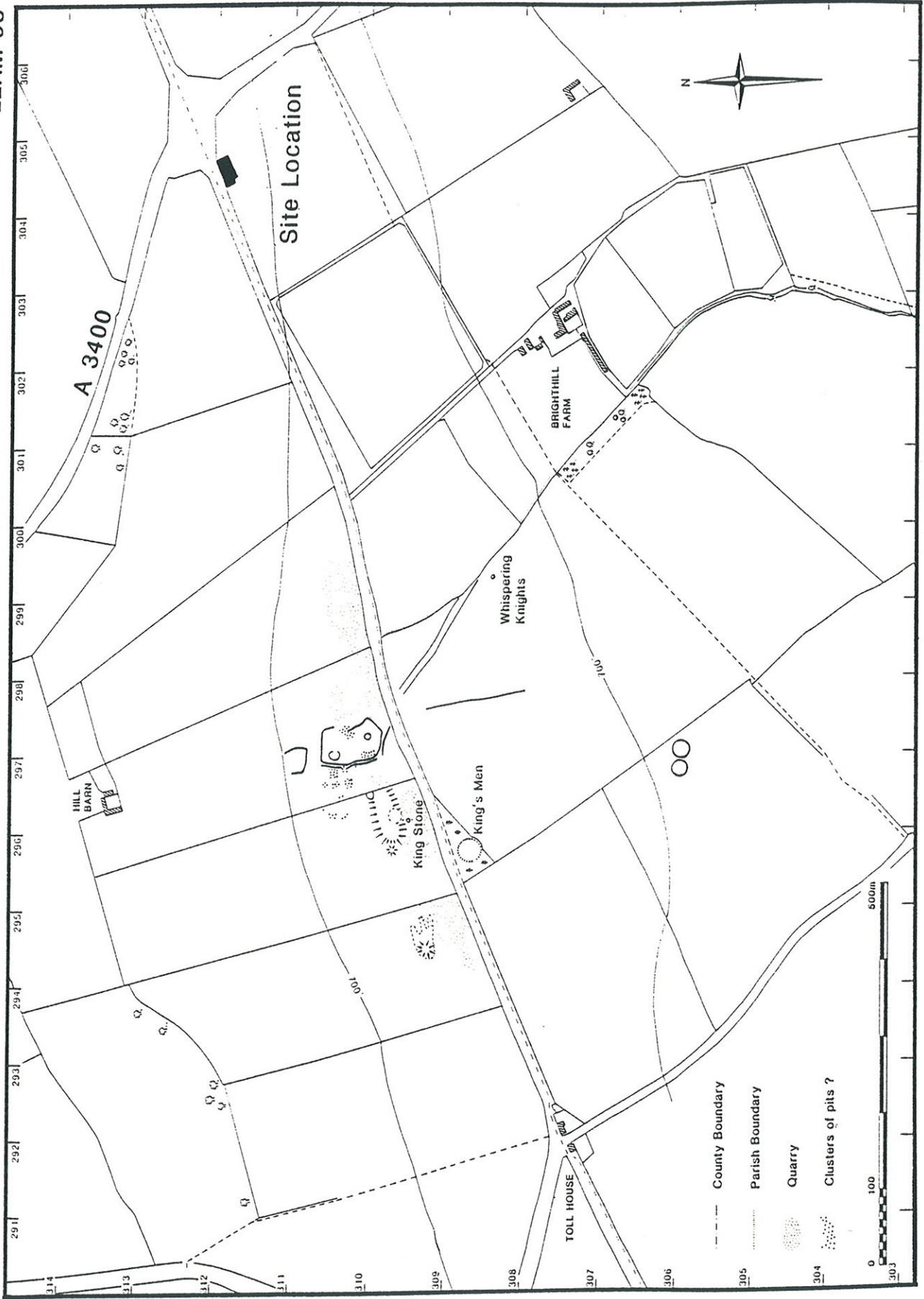


Figure 1: Site Location Plan

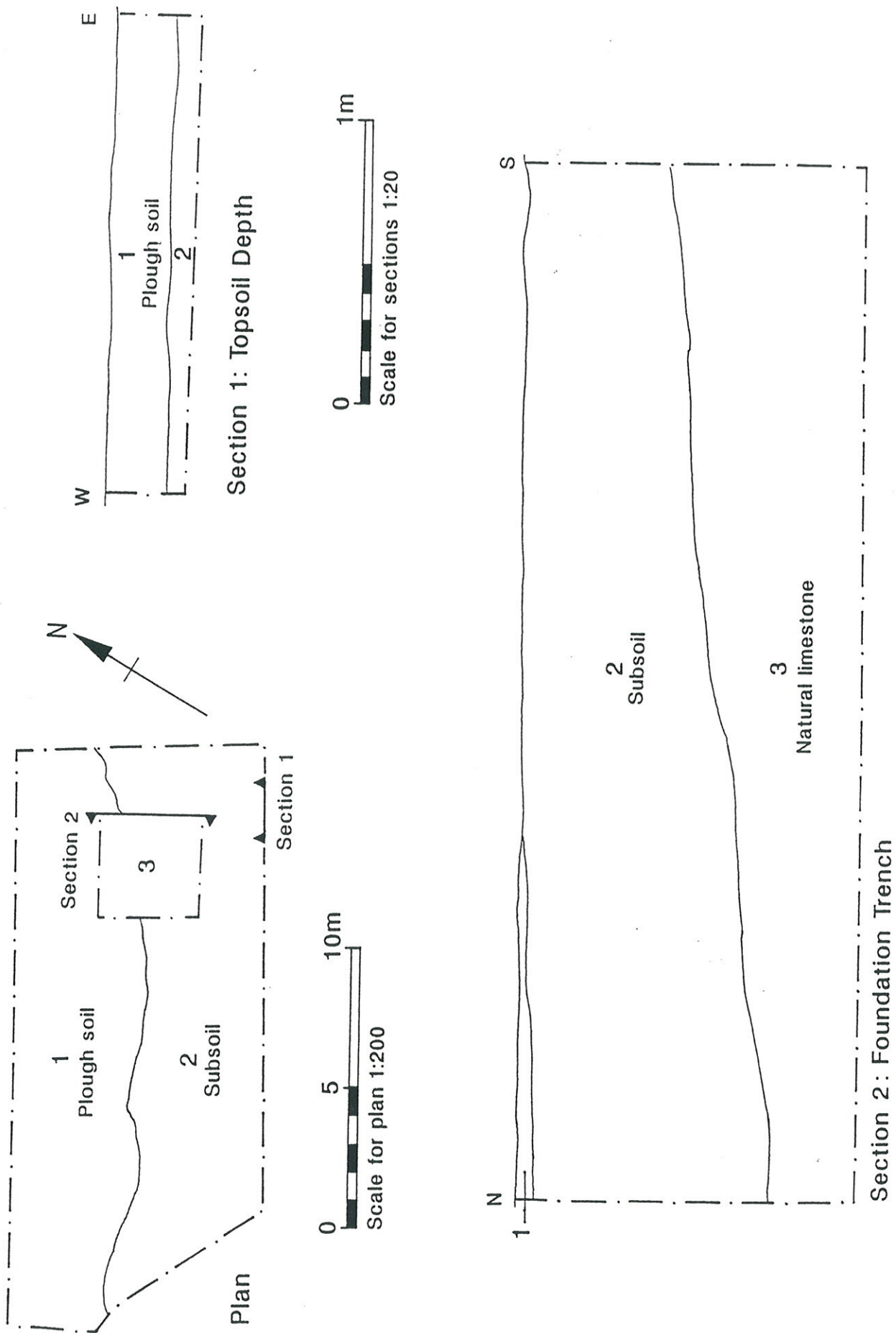


Figure 2: Site Plan And Sections



OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES

Tel: 01865 263800 Fax: 01865 793496
email: oau-oxford.demon.co.uk

