

Flick Quarry Rollright Oxfordshire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



Oxford Archaeology

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Flick Quarry, Rollright, Oxfordshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

Between 27th and 30th of June 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Flick Quarry, Rollright, Oxfordshire (NGR: SP 281 306). The work was commissioned by Hanson Quarry Products, Europe in advance of mineral extraction. The watching brief revealed evidence of post-medieval agricultural practices, but no earlier remains.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Between the 27th and 30th of June 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Flick Quarry (also known as Rollright Quarry), Rollright, Oxfordshire (NGR: SP 281 306). The work was commissioned by Hanson Quarry Products, Europe Ltd in respect of a planning application for mineral extraction (Planning Application No. 03/2004/P/TCN)
- 1.1.2 The County Archaeological Service had prepared a project brief for previous work on the site conducted by OA in 1999 and this brief was used for this round of investigation.
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (OA 2005) detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is situated approximately 1.4 km north-west of the village of Little Rollright, Oxfordshire (Fig. 1) and is located on a high limestone spur overlooking the Glyme Valley and Chipping Norton to the south, and the Stour Valley (Warwickshire) to the north. The area comprises arable farmland, now currently lying fallow with the site gently rising towards the centre.
- 1.2.2 The site lies at approximately 240 m OD and occupies an area of roughly 0.7 hectares (Fig. 2). The underlying geology is loam overlying Great Oolitic Limestone (British Geological Survey, Sheet no. 218).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA, 2005) and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 The site is situated just off the Saltway to Great Rollright Road (the Cotswold Ridgeway or Jurassic Way) which is the ancient road linking the East Midlands to the south-west. There is an early megalithic complex and barrow cemetery to the east of the site at the Rollright Stones (Oxfordshire County Monument No. 1). There are also an Iron Age and Roman settlements and a Saxon cemetery near to the stones.

- 1.3.3 The site itself produced a beaker vessel found in the 1940s and a Iron Age pit or ditch was exposed in the quarry face also at this date.
- 1.3.4 Previous work immediately to the east of the site in 1999 (OAU 1999), produced some evidence (pottery sherds and a pit) to suggest limited Middle Iron Age activity within the vicinity of the site and also evidence of small scale 18th - 19th century quarrying. Linear natural features caused by frost fractures were also observed

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To preserve by record any archaeological remains (if present) that the development may remove or damage within the impact area.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 A continuous archaeological presence was maintained during the period of the topsoil stripping. The excavation was undertaken by a 16 ton mechanical excavator fitted with a 2 m wide toothless grading bucket. Machining proceeded in spits down to the required level.
- 2.2.2 After the removal of the topsoil the exposed layers were identified as undisturbed deposits and recording proceeded at that level.
- 2.2.3 A plan of the machined areas was kept at a scale of 1:500 (Fig. 2) and sample sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. A photographic record of the work was made using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 Within the centre of the excavated area an approximately 60 m wide band of pale yellow-brown silt clay (3) was exposed, which contained many tilting bands of thinly bedded oolitic limestone. These bands ran roughly north to south and tilted approximately 25 degrees downwards towards the east. This deposit exhibited many features identified as frost fractures or heaving in its surface, although none displayed the linear qualities observed within the 1999 excavations.
- 3.1.2 Along the western edge of the stripped area a 40 m wide layer of yellow brown silty clay (4) was seen to overlie the western edge of layer 3. This layer contained

numerous pockets of heavily weathered oolitic limestone, which had decomposed to a pale yellow gritty clay. The remainder of the deposit contained many small sub-angular fragments of oolitic limestone.

- 3.1.3 At the eastern extent of the stripped area, a layer of reddish brown silt clay (2), approximately 80 m wide was exposed, overlying the eastern edge of layer 3. This deposit contained many small angular fragments of oolitic limestone.
- 3.1.4 The entire excavated area was sealed by a layer of dark brown loamy clay (1) of between 0.2 m and 0.3 m in depth. This context contained many small abraded oolitic limestone fragments, a small percentage of which displayed signs of burning.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 All the finds recovered during the course of the watching brief were of a late post-medieval date, probably the 19th and 20th centuries. These finds included a fragment of slate, two fragments of green bottle glass and two fragments of brick, all of which were recovered from layer 1. These finds were evaluated on site but were not retained.
- 3.2.2 No other artifacts were recovered from any of the other deposits.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

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

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 All the layers exposed during the stripping operation were natural in origin. Layer 3 appears to be the upper surface of a weathered oolitic limestone deposit whose position matches the slightly raised area noted within the centre of the site. Both layers 2 and 4 appear to be alluvial clay deposits and may be glacial in origin.
- 4.1.2 Layer 1 represents a layer of plough soil associated with the last known use of the land. The burnt limestone noted within this layer may be the result of straw burning as part of this activity.
- 4.1.3 The absence of features cutting into the surface of the natural deposits suggest that this area was outside the focus of any settlements including the Iron Age activity observed during the 1999 excavations. There is the possibility that subsequent agricultural activity may have truncated or destroyed any shallow features although the absence of residual finds recovered from the topsoil or truncated deeper features would mitigate against this.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	Layer	0.2 m - 0.3 m	Modern ploughsoil	Brick, slate and bottle glass	19th - 20th centuries
2	Layer	-	Weathered limestone	-	-
3	Layer	-	Alluvial clay	-	-
4	Layer	-	Alluvial clay	-	-

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OA 1992 *Field Manual*, (Ed. D Wilkinson)

OA 2000 *OA Environmental Guidelines for sampling (first edition, July 2000)*

OA 2005 *Flick Quarry, Rollright, Oxfordshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological watching Brief*

OAU 1999 *Rollright Quarry Archaeological Watching Brief Written Scheme of Investigation*

OAU 1999 *Rollright Quarry Archaeological Watching Brief Report*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Flick Quarry, Rollright, Oxfordshire

Site code: LIRQ 05

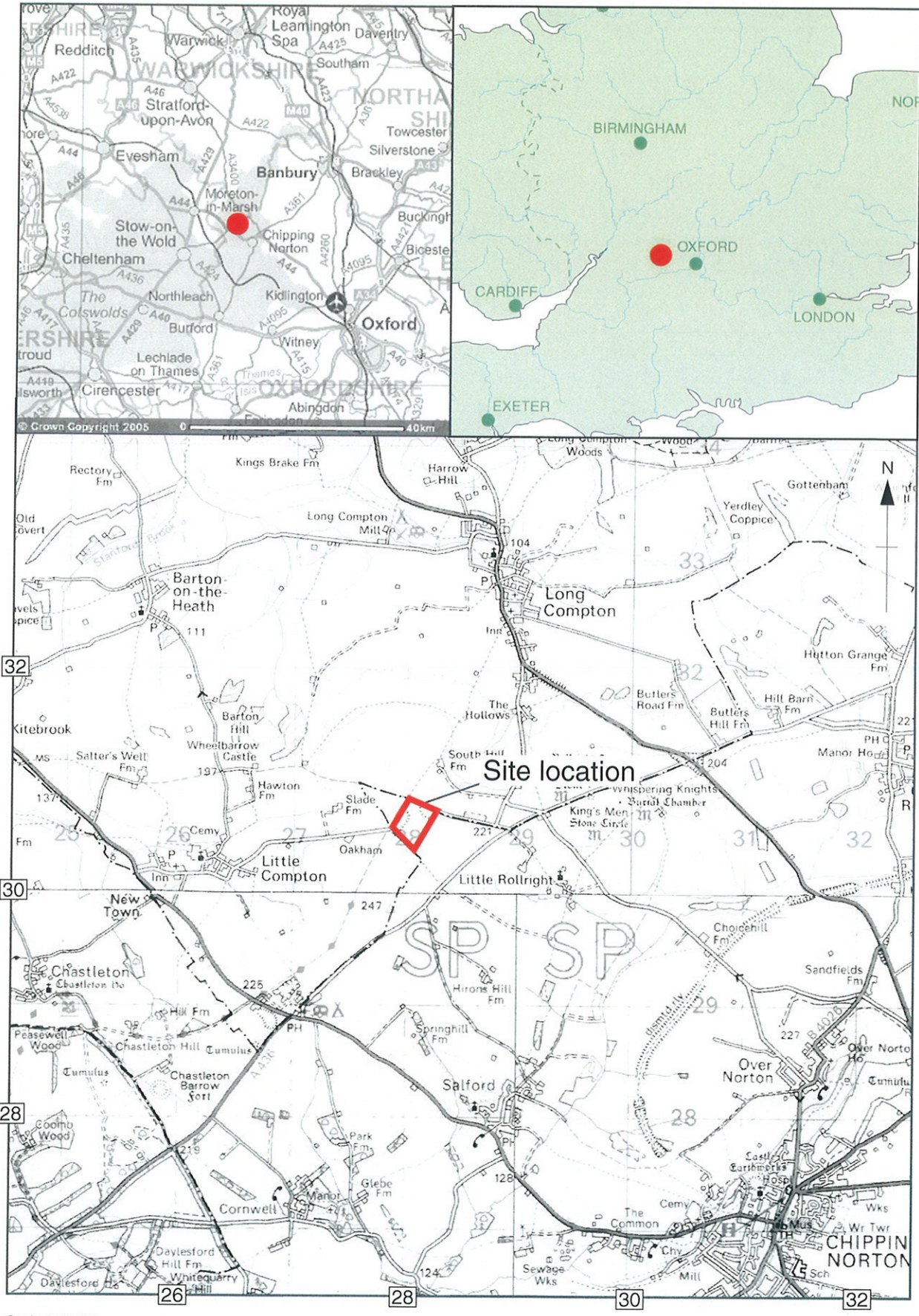
Grid reference: SP 281 306

Type of watching brief: Machine stripping of topsoil prior to mineral extraction

Date and duration of project: 4 days, 27th to 30th June 2005

Summary of results: Post-medieval agricultural soils sealing natural deposits

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course.



Scale 1:50,000

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Figure 1: Site location

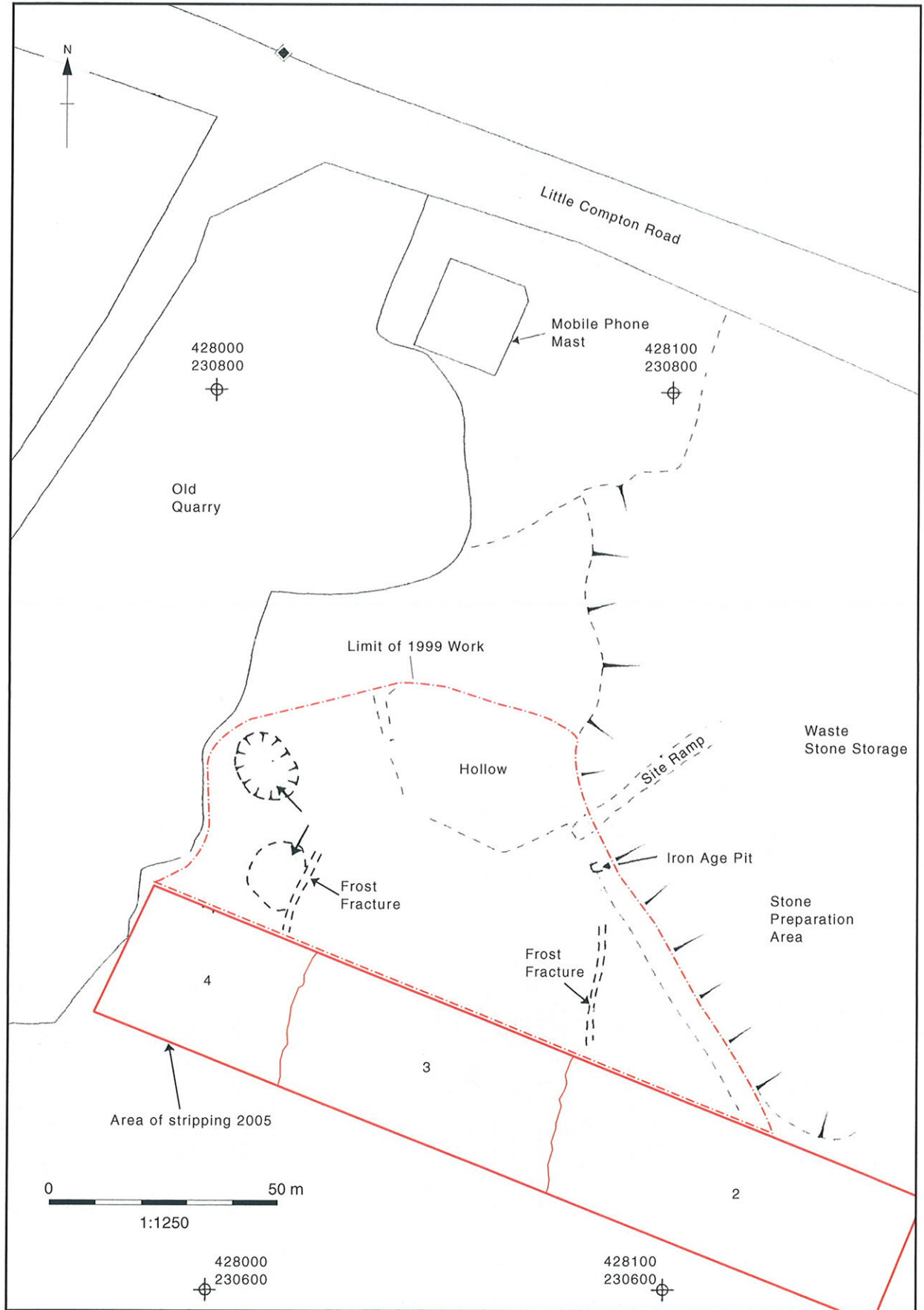


Figure 2: Site plan showing area of watching brief



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