

QUARRY EXTENSION
GRANGE FARM, KIRKBY ON BAIN,
LINCOLNSHIRE

TF 238 617

Revised Proposal for
Further Archaeological Excavation
to

English Heritage

April 1998

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QUARRY EXTENSION, GRANGE FARM, KIRKBY ON BAIN, LINCOLNSHIRE, TF 238 617 Assessment

Summary

A staged programme of archaeological investigation, in advance of sand and gravel extraction, has been carried out at Kirkby on Bain since 1995. This has culminated in the excavation of an area c.3250m² after topsoil stripping in preparation for quarrying. Contrary to expectations structural remains of late Neolithic date have been found along the eastern part of the site where the subsoil survives to a depth of up to 0.40m. Part of an enclosure ditch with a corner entrance is overlain by a double row of postholes extending for at least 40m along the same alignment as the filled-in ditch. A second enclosure ditch, apparently also of Neolithic date, lies to the west, again on the same alignment.

Provision was made for the cleaning, investigation and recording of up to 2500m² of ground after topsoil stripping in preparation for sand and gravel extraction. The quarry company has exceeded this requirement but there is every reason to suspect that further features may survive in areas which have yet to be stripped of topsoil and subsoil.

Part of the site has already been stripped of topsoil and is already badly weathered. Extraction is continuing apace and there is limited time available to complete excavation of part of the site.

1 Background

1.1 Introduction

Lindsey Archaeological Services was commissioned by Woodhall Spa Sand and Gravel Company to carry out an assessment of the archaeological potential of their proposed quarry extension in January 1995 which was required prior to determination of their planning application for sand and gravel extraction. Following evaluation of the site by trial trenching planning permission was granted subject to the implementation of a scheme of archaeological works. The scheme required excavation of 1m² pits set out in a grid pattern across the east field; cleaning of an area up to 2500m² after topsoil stripping prior to sand and gravel extraction and recording of any features revealed (see Appendix 3).

1.2 Site Location

The quarry is located in the Bain valley at the southern end of the Lincolnshire Wolds (Fig. 1). The desk-top study and geophysical survey area initially comprised four fields west of Kirkby Lane, in Kirkby on Bain parish, covering c.15ha in extent but later phases of assessment were confined to the two easternmost fields (c.7.5ha) which comprise the Phase 1 area of the extraction programme. A watching brief condition is still outstanding on the remainder of the site which constitutes the Phase 2 area for extraction to be paid for by the developer.

2 Previous Work funded by Woodhall Spa Sand and Gravel Co.

A staged programme of archaeological investigation has been carried out comprising:

- Desk top study
- Geophysical survey
- Fieldwalking
- Evaluation trenches
- Test pits
- Open-area excavation during topsoil stripping immediately prior to quarrying

2.1 Desk Top Study and Geophysical Survey (February 1995)

A scatter of worked flints had been found by Peter Chowne during his fieldwalking survey of the Bain Valley (1983-6) but there was no other archaeological information about the site.

A magnetic susceptibility survey was carried out by Stratascan over the whole site and three areas were selected for magnetometry (covering approximately 20% of the site) (Fig. 2).

The results were inconclusive but the survey pinpointed an enhanced zone of magnetism which coincided with the area containing the scatter of worked flints in NE corner of the application area. However, the magnetometer survey failed to define any features which, at the time, was interpreted as suggesting a low level of human activity.

2.2 Evaluation Trenches (December 1995) (Figs. 2 and 3)

Trial trenching was requested in order to confirm the findings of the geophysical survey. 26 trenches were machine-excavated to the base of the modern ploughsoil, 20 west of a large drainage dyke, 6 east of the dyke, all but three measuring 20x1.6m. They were regularly spaced across the site, but the pattern was varied to target the geophysical anomalies. Three trenches, c.5x6m were positioned over three circular anomalies, whilst one of the narrow trenches was placed across the most substantial linear magnetic anomaly.

The 20 trenches excavated in the larger of the two fields revealed a series of recently dug ditches/gullies and a few pits, only one of which contained any finds (a single sherd of Roman pottery). Apart from a possible modern ditch at the south end of the field there were no recorded archaeological features in the six trenches dug in the field adjacent to Kirkby Lane.

The flint scatter discovered by Chowne (SMR primary record no. 40125) was re-walked to define more precisely the distribution of artefacts. It extended nearly the full length of the field and, despite poor ground conditions (the field was set aside land), some 400 artefacts were retrieved (Fig. 4). This was followed by the hand-excavation of a 2x2m square trench over the densest concentration of flint found during fieldwalking. All ploughsoil was sieved to maximise artefact recovery. The subsoil was trowelled in two spits, each of 0.05-0.10m in thickness. 110 flints were retrieved.

2.3 Test Pits (October 1996) (Fig. 5)

The 26 evaluation trenches showed that there was a real absence of flint artefacts west of the modern drainage dyke and a further stage of investigation concentrated on the small eastern field adjacent to Kirkby Lane.

It was felt that if ploughing had severely damaged the site, as demonstrated by excavations in 1981, east of Kirkby Lane and SW of the present site, (Chowne 1993) there was a likelihood that few Neolithic archaeological deposits would survive. It was therefore considered that archaeological intervention after topsoil stripping would yield poor results.

After consultation with Daryl Garton a strategy of test pitting was devised where a pit 1m x 1m would be excavated per 20m x 20m grid covering the whole field providing a 0.4% sample of the field. Careful plotting of artefact distribution across the full extent of the scatter would enable at least some spatial analysis of the material to be carried out but a provision for recording of stripped areas (up to 50m x 50m) during quarrying was also included in the scheme of works in case features should be present (Field 1996) See Appendix 3.

The test pits were positioned in the NW corner of each 20m square using a geodimeter Total Station. Each 20m square was given a grid number and the 1m square in the NW corner was given a

corresponding box number. Squares on the edge of the field which were not able to house a box in their NW corner were still designated numbers for the plotting of fieldwalking finds. A total of 64 squares were fully investigated, 4 partially excavated.

Topsoil was rapidly excavated by shovel in 50mm spits. All material from the topsoil was sieved and recorded in bulk (not individually plotted). Subsequent deposits were removed in 50mm spits using a trowel and each artefact encountered was individually plotted. Further finds from the spits, found during sieving, were bulk recorded. A N-S transect and an E-W transect were excavated fully to the gravels so a profile of the site's stratigraphy could be obtained. The few features encountered were excavated in the conventional manner.

The field had been walked over again prior to the start of excavations but lack of weathering of the ploughed soil, combined with poor light conditions, resulted in a very low retrieval rate (23 flint artefacts and 1 sherd of pottery). It was therefore decided that during excavation of the test pits the area would be re-walked. The ground was walked at 5m intervals and finds were located to their test pit grid square (20m²). The site was fieldwalked twice using this method. Finds were also retrieved and allocated to the appropriate grid squares, but kept separate from the transect fieldwalking.

2.4 Excavation (December 1997-January 1998) (Fig. 5 and 6)

An area of 2500m² had been allocated for the recording of archaeological remains once topsoil had been removed. The number of finds retrieved from each grid square clearly highlighted areas of considerable activity along the eastern boundary of the field. Neolithic pottery had been retrieved only from test pits at the NE corner of the site.

Initially, three areas totalling c.250m² were selected, all located along the eastern boundary, c.5m from the hedgeline. Only Area 1, had produced Neolithic pottery in the test pits. Area 2 was positioned mid-way down the field. Area 3, at the south end, though having equally high numbers of flint artefacts on the surface did not have associated features appearing in test pits. These areas were expected only to produce artefacts in the subsoil. Subsoil in all three areas was to be removed by hand, finds were 3-D co-ordinated in the hope that clusters marking where features once were could be identified.

2.4.1 Area 1 (30m x 30m, reduced to c.11m x 25m due to time restrictions)

A few features were exposed beneath the subsoil (which was deepest to the east). 13 flint artefacts and no pottery were obtained from this area.

2.4.2 Area 2 (30 x 15.50m)

111 sherds of Neolithic pottery, and a large number of flint artefacts were found in the subsoil. Remnants of a Neolithic ground surface survived beneath the subsoil into which were dug four possible Neolithic storage pits and four pit/posthole features which contained flints and pottery. Medieval ridge and furrow was also exposed.

A trench 41m x 4m wide was excavated extending west from Area 2 to obtain a cross section of deposits against the drain which formed the western boundary of the field. The drain appears to follow a natural watercourse which marks the limit of the flint scatter. No archaeological features were recorded but samples were taken for environmental analysis.

The zone between Areas 1 and 2 (Area 6) was sacrificed to enable sand extraction to commence. A few features were recorded during a watching brief on this area.

2.4.3 Area 3 (23m x 21m)

This area was disturbed by medieval ditches, as well as ridge and furrow, but a semi-circular structure comprising at least 6 postholes and approximately 2.5m across survived, as did two gully terminals, pits and a handful of pits along a c.15m wide strip between two plough furrows.

2.4.4 Area 4 (20m x 20m)

The County Archaeologist requested that the ground between Areas 2 and 3 should be investigated to establish whether the density of archaeological remains was continuous. A north-south aligned Neolithic ditch together with the north-west corner of a possible later posthole structure (4 postholes) cutting the ditch were found.

2.4.5 Area 5 (63m x 23m)

The presence of apparent structural remains in Area 4 led to a further extension and the whole strip between Areas 2 and 4 was opened up. Given the time and financial constraints it was decided that recording of finds in the subsoil would be abandoned in favour of obtaining a plan of any surviving features over as large an area as possible.

The Neolithic ditch in Area 4 continued into Area 5 and an east-west return was found. Two parallel rows of postholes were found, one of which was dug into the ditch fill. This row extends for at least 35m before its alignment runs into the eastern limits of the excavation and comprises 7 postholes. An eighth posthole at the north end may also belong to this alignment extending the total length to 43m. A second row to the east, on a similar but converging alignment, comprises 8 postholes and extends for at least 46m before running past the excavation limits at the south end. The north end of the alignment turns east with two more postholes/pits in the 6m gap between the corner of the post alignment and the edge of the excavations.

The limited investigation of the postholes carried out so far has yielded two sherds of Neolithic pottery and carbonised material (including hazelnuts). Part of a boundary ditch to the west, was also exposed. This had been cut through by a medieval plough furrow on a similar alignment.

The features have been recorded in plan and a sample of post-holes have been sectioned. They remain exposed and excavation of this area has not been completed.

3 Aims and Objectives

A survey of mineral extraction and its impact upon archaeological sites in North Lincolnshire in 1976 identified the Bain Valley as one of considerable archaeological potential and led to excavation of a Bronze Age barrow at West Ashby in 1977. Further archaeological investigations were carried out at Tattershall Thorpe Neolithic settlement in 1981 (Chowne et al. 1993).

The survival of structural remains on Neolithic sites is rare. Lincolnshire boasts only two or three examples, Newton Cliffs (Garton) and Tattershall Thorpe (Chowne 1993) have been published. The features already recorded at Grange Farm Kirkby on Bain are undoubtedly truncated but survive well enough to enable phasing of the features. Associated diagnostic pottery and flint has been found.

It is hoped that by recording as much as possible of the surviving Neolithic features and studying the associated distribution of pottery and worked flint that some understanding of the land use may be reached. The site appears to be located on the margins of land available for occupation because of intermittently wet ground conditions, which may only have been accessible on a seasonal basis. Contemporary occupation in the lower Bain valley is known from Tattershall Thorpe and further flint scatters (as yet not investigated). Whether these are discrete sites or indicative of transient occupation in the valley is not yet clear.

The site will be totally destroyed by quarrying within the next 2-3 months.

The aims of the excavation will be:

1. To record in plan all surviving Neolithic (and any other) archaeological features revealed in the remaining strip of ground protected by subsoil. This will ensure the maximum possible retrieval of data for considering Neolithic land use and exploitation.
2. To excavate a sample of linear and non-linear features to determine their form, function and any stratigraphic relationship to other features.
3. To obtain dating and environmental evidence from the excavated features and samples for C14 dating. Although general survival of environmental evidence is poor the samples already taken have produced carbonised remains from postholes which have also contained both pottery and worked flint. There is enough material from three of the 6 environmental samples already processed for C14 dating and will provide independent dating for associated pottery and worked flint.
4. To continue 3-D plotting of all finds encountered. A large proportion of finds from the evaluatory stages and the excavation have been individually recorded and there is potential for spatial analysis of flints and pottery in relation to the structural remains.
5. To compare the excavated assemblage with material from the topsoil and the fieldwalking assemblages. It is hoped that analysis of the pottery and worked flint will allow tighter dating of fieldwalking flint assemblage to be made. With so few excavated sites in the region the flint assemblage already retrieved is an important group of material and has the potential for comparing with flint scatters from other sites (Appendix 1).
6. To review the techniques used for evaluating this site for application on other sites of similar character.

4 Potential for Future Research

The study of Neolithic and Bronze Age landscapes is highlighted as a priority in the English Heritage Draft Research Agenda. The importance of the discoveries at Kirkby on Bain Quarry is enhanced by its proximity to other contemporary sites. It lies only 200m NW of the excavations carried out by Chowne in Tattershall Thorpe parish where post-holes and pits were found. The published account of these features is relatively short and could be re-examined in the light of these new discoveries to try and better understand how the landscape was being developed and exploited through the Neolithic and early Bronze Ages. A comparison of the flint assemblages may also be valuable. Of particular note at Tattershall Thorpe was the difference between the date range in the assemblages retrieved from the topsoil and the excavated features. The material found at Grange Farm appears to be more limited in date there is potential for comparing the differences in the two assemblages.

Further fieldwalking has located groups of flint (Mesolithic-Bronze Age in date) in the lower Bain Valley which point to the high potential for preserved remains beneath alluvial deposits adjacent to the River Bain. Much of this area is designated by Lincolnshire County Council for minerals extraction (*Lincolnshire Minerals Local Plan 1991*) and is under threat.

5 Proposed further investigation at Kirkby on Bain Quarry (funding by English Heritage)

The accumulation of soil close to the eastern boundary hedge appears to have allowed features a greater chance of survival in a zone approximately 25-30m wide running parallel to this boundary. All areas excavated so far have revealed Neolithic remains. The edge of the quarry workings is 5-6m from the hedge, leaving a strip of c.20-25m wide available for investigation.

A new area between Areas 3 and 4 is proposed for excavation in order to reveal more of the structure in Area 4 and to expose the southern return for the ditch running through Areas 4 and 5.

6 METHOD STATEMENT

6.1 Excavation

Further excavation is proposed in three areas, Areas 5, 7 and 8.

Archaeological recording will be carried out by a team of 6 experienced archaeologists, including a Site Director. The trenches will be hand-cleaned to reveal features in plan. Carefully selected cross-sections through all the features will be excavated and sampled as described below. All non-linear features containing material of high potential for environmental work will be fully excavated.

A full written (single context) and photographic record will be made of the site, to include site plans at a scale of 1:50 and section drawings at 1:10 or 1:20 as appropriate. A full photographic record will be made during the progress of the excavation to cover each feature together with general site shots. LAS operates a standard context recording system, developed by its staff over the past 20 years based on MOLAS and CAS models.

6.1.1 Area 5

Area 5 has been stripped of topsoil and subsoil. All exposed features have been fully planned, levelled, photographed and recorded. This area is currently exposed to weathering and is closest to the working quarry face. The quarry company want to continue sand and gravel extraction immediately after Easter.

Requirements for further work:

- Half-section excavation of all non-linear features, pits, post-holes etc to include, where possible, environmental samples.
- Sample excavation of all linear features, not exceeding 10% area, to obtain representative cross-sections, dating evidence and, where possible, environmental samples.
- Plan section and photographic record of sectioned features

6.1.2 Area 7

This area lies south of Area 4 and has not been disturbed. Neolithic features are likely to extend into this area from Area 4.

Requirements for further work:

- Topsoil and subsoil strip by machine using toothless bucket (machine to be supplied by quarry)
- Cleaning of subsoil/Neolithic land surface interface by hand
- 3-D plotting of all finds encountered
- Full plan and photographic record of all features
- Half-section excavation of all non-linear features, pits, post-holes etc to include, where possible, environmental samples.
- Sample excavation of all linear features, not exceeding 10% area, to obtain representative cross-sections, dating evidence and, where possible, environmental samples
- Plan section and photographic record of sectioned features

6.1.3 Area 8

This area lies south of Area 3 and has already been stripped of topsoil. The density of features in this area is not clear. After preliminary discussion with English Heritage and the County Archaeological Officer it has been agreed not to hand-excavate the subsoil in this area.

Requirements for further work:

- Sub-soil strip by machine using toothless bucket (machine to be supplied by quarry)
- Cleaning of subsoil/Neolithic ground surface interface by hand
- 3-D plotting of all finds encountered
- Full plan and photographic record of all features
- Half-section excavation of all non-linear features, pits, post-holes etc to include, where possible, environmental samples.
- Sample excavation of all linear features, not exceeding 10% area, to obtain representative cross-sections, dating evidence and, where possible, environmental samples

- Plan section and photographic record of sectioned features

6.2 Environmental Sampling Strategy

Environmental samples taken during the evaluation phases of the work have shown poor survival of anything but carbonised remains (see Appendix 4). Pollen and animal bone do not generally survive on the site there is no survival of any plant remains unless it is carbonised. It should be noted that the features sampled at this stage were not Neolithic in date.

Samples taken from Neolithic features during the 1997/8 season have produced hazelnuts and charcoal. Of the samples already processed three have produced enough hazelnuts to provide a C14 determination. (These samples come from features containing associate diagnostic pottery and flint).

It is therefore proposed that all excavated features should be sampled. Samples normally to be the total fill of feature if less than 30 litres in volume a maximum of 30 litres. Where a feature is obviously rich in remains the sample should be greater to allow for the retrieval of species less well represented.

Material to be processed off-site but during the progress of the excavation so that further sampling of features will be possible if necessary.. Wet sieving using a 0.5mm sieve. The flots to be dried and re-sieved to allow maximum retrieval of charcoal.

6.3 Conservation

It is not anticipated that materials will require conservation, except possibly consolidation of fragile pottery. A few Roman and Saxon pieces of pottery have been found (unstratified) which may mean that metal items of intrinsic interest could be present, although none has been found so far. All work required would be undertaken through the Lincoln Conservation Laboratory under the supervision of Robert White. Any conservation programme would be subject to recommendations arising from the Assessment Report.

6.4 Post Excavation

Provision has already been made for post-excavation and report preparation for material excavated up to February 1998 and will be funded by the developer. Post excavation for the work funded by English Heritage will be carried out according to MAP2 specifications. The resulting Assessment Report and Updated Project Design will inevitably take account of the total assemblage of material. Any final report will need to integrate all seasons of investigation, some of which has been developer funded and some funded by English Heritage.

6.4.1 Preparation of Site Archive

All finds (except metal, friable pot etc) will be washed, marked and packed according to the Lincolnshire County Council *Conditions for the Acceptance of Archaeological Project Archives*. Processing of finds will be carried out by LAS before passing on to specialists for identification and assessment.

A short summary of the range quality and condition of the artefacts will be prepared. (All the artefacts from the excavation will have been individually recorded and a database will be prepared to allow sorting and plotting of the finds data by material, date, form or any other appropriate grouping at the analysis stage of the report. Microsoft Office 97 software will be used which is compatible with software used by Lincolnshire County Council SMR.)

Environmental samples will be processed and an assessment report prepared.

A copy of the paper archive will be made.

A full site matrix and a short summary comprising a descriptive account of the site will be prepared.

6.4.2 Assessment Report and Updated Project Design

An Assessment Report and Updated Project Design will be prepared in accordance with Appendices 4 and 5 of MAP 2 and the draft minimum standards documentation guidelines.

It will contain

an assessment of the potential for further analysis of all the excavated material (both developer and EH funded),

a statement on the long term storage and curation requirements of the site archive updated aims and objectives which arise out of the assessed importance of the recorded structural remains, artefact assemblage and environmental data in relation to the site itself and also the importance of the site in its regional setting
a costed scheme for any further work considered necessary

6.5 Dissemination

Copies will be deposited with English Heritage, Lincolnshire County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) and the City and County Museum, Lincoln and the NMR.

The deposition of a copy of the report at the SMR will be deemed to put all information in the public domain, unless a request is made for confidentiality. If material is to be held in confidence a timescale must be agreed with the Lincolnshire County Archaeological Officer. In normal circumstances the agreed term does not usually exceed six months.

6.6 Site Archive

It is proposed that the site paper archive and any archaeological finds should be deposited with the City and County Museum, Lincoln, after completion of the site analysis and subject to agreement with the landowner. LAS and its sub-contractors follow the conditions laid down by the City and County Museum, Lincoln in its draft document *Guidelines for the Transfer of Project Archives*, and will comply with their current requirements.

6.7 Publication

In addition to the Assessment Report and Updated Project Design which is the subject of this application a short note summarising the main results of the project will be presented for publication to the Editor of *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology* with full acknowledgement to the original client and English Heritage. The appropriate vehicle for more detailed publication will be the subject of further discussion subject to assessment of the excavation results. However, the importance of the site has already been demonstrated and it is provisionally intended to publish an account of the project results in *PPS*.

7 Copyright

LAS and its sub-contractors shall retain full copyright of any commissioned reports or other project documents, including all data, text and graphics, (in accordance with IFA guidelines) under the Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved; excepting that it hereby provides a licence to the client for the use of such documents by the client in all matters directly relating to the project as described in the Project Specification. The Museum and SMR will be given a licence to make all reasonable professional use of this material, granted that the LAS copyright is acknowledged.

8 Health and Safety

All site work will be carried out in accordance with the relevant current Health and Safety legislation. A copy of the LAS Health and Safety Document is enclosed with this application and a Risk Assessment will be prepared prior to commencement of work on site.

9 Insurance

LAS is fully covered by Employers and Public Liability and Professional Indemnity insurances, copies of which are available for inspection on request. Fieldwalking and associated surveying does not involve any intrusive groundworks and every care will be taken by LAS and its sub-contractors to ensure minimal disturbance to growing crops.

10 Monitoring

Internal monitoring of the project will be carried out by Naomi Field, (Partner, LAS); on-site monitoring will comprise a daily assessment of finds retrieval policy to ensure uniformity of collection. Responsibility for the external archaeological monitoring of this project currently lies with the Archaeology Section, Lincolnshire County Council.

11 TERMS AND CONDITIONS

11.1 General

Prior to commencement of the work an Accession Number and site code will be obtained from the City and County Museum, Lincoln, in accordance with current requirements.

LAS operates according to the Codes of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists and its Standards on Archaeological Evaluations and Excavations.

Naomi Field
March 20th 1998

12 References

Chowne, P., 1993 'The excavation of a Neolithic site at Tattershall Thorpe, Lincolnshire', in R. Bradley et al. *Excavations on Redgate Hill, Hunstanton and at Tattershall Thorpe, Lincolnshire*. East Anglian Archaeology 57

Field, N. 1996 Kirkby on Bain: Sand and Gravel Extraction Scheme of Archaeological Works Phase 1 Part A

English Heritage 1991 Management of Archaeological Projects

English Heritage 1997 *Research Agenda* (Draft)

Lincolnshire County Council 1991, *Lincolnshire Minerals Local Plan*

STRUCTURE OF TEAM AND ASSIGNED TASKS

Lindsey Archaeological Services

Fieldwork Director: Naomi Field (Partner LAS)

Site Supervisor: Michael McDaid

Task: to complete excavations, prepare assessment report and co-ordinate specialists reports.

Finds and Other Specialists to include as required

Worked flint, Adnan Baysal, LAS. Initial assessment of material has been carried out by Elizabeth Healey

Prehistoric pottery (Dr Carol Allen, freelance archaeologist (Neolithic/Bronze Age);

Roman pottery (Barbara Precious, freelance archaeologist, formerly City of Lincoln Archaeology Unit)

Saxon pottery (Jane Young City of Lincoln Archaeology Unit or Dr Alan Vince)

Animal bone and environmental samples (James Rackham Environmental Consultancy)

Conservation (Lincoln Conservation Laboratory, Lincolnshire County Council Museums Service)

LAS reserves the right to use alternative specialists depending on availability.

Task: Identification of finds and preparation of assessment reports

Specialist Sub Contractors

Midland Surveying and Engineering

Fieldwork Director: Ian Peters (Partner MSE)

Task: Preparation of finds plots from survey already completed and data to be supplied on Excel software.