

3.0 PRE-DETERMINATION ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

The earliest investigations associated with the quarry were undertaken by Mike Griffiths and Associates, in support of a planning application for sand and gravel extraction at Nosterfield. A desk-based assessment was carried out, followed by an archaeological evaluation.

3.1 INVESTIGATION 1 (DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT)

In July 1991, Tilcon Ltd. commissioned a preliminary archaeological survey for an area of proposed quarrying near to Nosterfield (MGA 1991; MGA 1992). This involved a desk-based assessment of the archaeological resource, using records available at the time (Phase 1), following which attention was paid to an area in the northern part of the proposed quarry, known as the Flasks. This area was subject to a walkover survey, the recovery and sieving of samples of peat, the extraction of a 1m monolith, and the preparation of a deposit model (Phase 2).

3.1.1 Fieldwork results

Phase 1

The desk-based assessment was compiled following an examination of records held in the North Yorkshire SMR, County Archives, local history collections and available aerial photographs. The importance of the area as a prehistoric ritual landscape was recognised, as was the fact that features associated with this landscape would extend into the area to be quarried. This research identified pre-existing soil surveys which suggested that the area of pasture beneath the Flasks contained peat deposits potentially containing palaeoenvironmental evidence. As such, investigations commenced to ascertain the extent of the peat, and the nature of remains preserved within it.

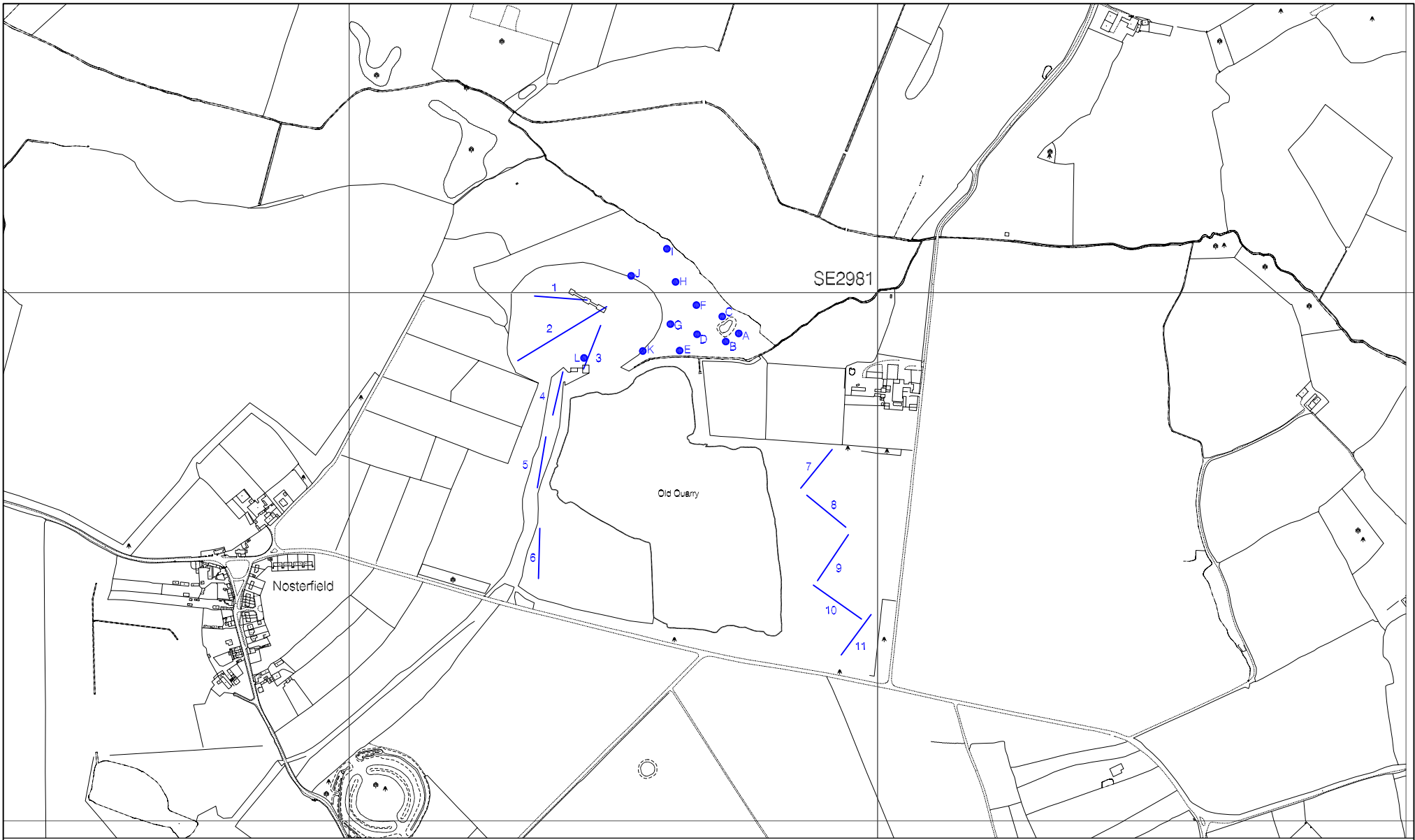
Phase 2

In October 1991, a 1m monolith was extracted from the Flasks (SE 286 808), and subject to analysis (Berg 1991), which revealed that the peat at Nosterfield is phragmites peat, formed at the edge of an ancient lake. During sampling, a number of flint items were recovered from the surface of the area, which have since been subject to specialist study and identified as flakes of uncertain date (Appendix C: Part 1).

Following these results, the area of investigation was extended, and a walkover survey of an area of pasture was undertaken. In twelve locations (A to L), 2kg samples of exposed peat/soil were collected and wet-sieved; finds recovered from this were all identified as modern brick or tile (Figure 4). This survey allowed some conclusions to be drawn concerning the extent of the peat, and the area was subsequently subject to an auger survey, which confirmed the presence of a continuous stratum of peat, which became shallower towards the north of the area. The survey also identified a number of much deeper channels which may have been formed by water.

3.2 INVESTIGATION 2 (EVALUATION)

An evaluation was carried out in January 1995 by AOC (Scotland) on behalf of Mike Griffiths and Associates, for Tilcon Ltd., in advance of the extension of the gravel quarry at Nosterfield (Quarry Phase 1a, 5b; see Figure



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Location of Investigations 1 and 2

Scale 1:10000



Figure 4

2). Two areas were subject to investigation: a corridor to the west of the earlier quarry, for the installation of a haul road, and a rectangular area to the east of the earlier quarry. The evaluation consisted of eleven trial trenches. All trenches were 100m x 2m, with the exception of Trench 2, which measured 200m x 2m (see Figure 4). The topsoil was stripped, and visible features were cleaned, excavated and recorded (Dalland 1995).

3.2.1 Fieldwork results

The Flasks (Trenches 1 to 3)

Work on the area of the Flasks revealed a total of four features of potential archaeological interest, comprising two linear features and two sub-circular pits. Of these, one of the pits (Cut 102) and one of the ditches (Cut 104) produced modern material, and the second ditch (Cut 106) was identified as an old hedgerow. The final pit produced no datable remains.

Haul Road (Trenches 4 to 6)

Within Trenches 4 to 6, apart from a modern field drain in Trench 4, the only identifiable features were two sub-rectangular pits identified in Trench 6 (Cut 603, Cut 605). Two samples from these features revealed that they contained carbonised hazelnut shells and charcoal, as well as a flint artefacts (Holden 1995). Analysis of the flint remains suggested that they would not be out of place in a Neolithic context, but that they could not be used to ascribe a secure date (Rowe 1998; Appendix C: Part 1).

Eastern end of the old quarry pit (Trenches 7 to 11)

Within Trenches 7 to 11, just three features of archaeological potential were identified, comprising a circular pit (Cut 702), the butt-end of a ditch (Cut 1001) and a linear feature (Cut 1103), of which none produced diagnostic or dateable finds.

3.2.2 Assessment

Given the proximity of Investigation 2 to the known monument complexes of Thornborough, the lack of archaeological features identified in this area was notable. The potential of the area to produce prehistoric features was suggested by the environmental evidence and flints produced from pits (Cut 603 and Cut 605), but such features appear to have been very widely dispersed throughout the area. The excavation of trenches covered a total area of 2400m², and only two recorded features provided material indicative of a potentially early date; perhaps significantly, these were found in the same trench.

4.0 WATCHING BRIEF

4.1 INVESTIGATION 3 (AREA 1, 2 AND 3, TRENCH 4)

Also in 1995, a watching brief was undertaken during the stripping of topsoil in an area of Nosterfield Quarry previously evaluated by Trenches 7 to 11 of Investigation 2 (Quarry Phase 1a, 5b)(Figure 5). For the purposes of recording, this area was divided into Areas 1 and 2. A watching brief was also maintained on the construction of the haul road, referred to as Area 3, which had been covered by Trenches 4 to 6. The results of this fieldwork