

Land to the Rear of 1 Newtown, Thetford, Norfolk

NLA Ref: CNF41320

HER Ref: ENF 126533

Archaeological Monitoring Report

(Continuous observation of ground works)

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(June 2011)

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Site details for HER

Name: Land to the rear of 1 Newtown, Thetford, Norfolk, IP24 3AS

Client: Mr J Byrne

Local planning authority: Breckland DC

Development: Erection of 2 no. Semi-detached houses with parking

Planning application: 3PL/2008/0495/F

Date of fieldwork: 12 May, 2011

HER Ref: ENF 126533

OASIS Ref: johnnewm1-101054

Grid ref: TL 8647 8268

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Summary: Thetford, land to the rear of 1 Newtown (HER: ENF 126533, TL 8647 8268) monitoring of ground works for two, semi-detached, houses revealed an extensive depth of subsoil from which a moderate quantity of late Saxon and early medieval pottery was recovered. However the foundation trenches were too deep and unstable to enter and it was unclear whether archaeological features were present in their base, if they were present any such features would have been preserved in situ. Of minor interest was a domestic type air raid shelter of World War II date. (John Newman Archaeological Services for Mr J Byrne).

1. Introduction & background

1.1 Anglia Design on behalf of their client, Mr J Byrne, commissioned John Newman Archaeological Services (JNAS) to undertake the archaeological monitoring of ground works for a small residential development within the area of the late Saxon town at Thetford (see Fig. 1) in order to meet the requirements of the relevant planning condition for application 3PL/2008/0495/F. The monitoring requirements were set out in a Brief (see Appendix II) set by Mr J Albone of Norfolk Landscape Archaeology. The relevant development being the erection of two, semi-detached, houses with parking on a plot of land that until recently had been part of the back garden of No 1 Newtown and which will front onto Icknield Way.

1.2 Thetford is a town in south-west Norfolk with an obvious historic core on the northern bank of the Little Ouse River, which also forms the county boundary with Suffolk to the south along much of its course, and a modern suburb on the southern bank. The local landscape is dominated by the Breckland of Suffolk and Norfolk characterised by wide, open spaces of former grazing ground due to the very light, sandy soils over a chalk geology giving rise to an area of poor soil moisture retention. In the Breckland landscape past settlement is dominated by the need to be close to a water source and is therefore usually close to the few rivers and streams. The Little Ouse River flows east to west and is the main river in the area with Thetford being located at a pre-historic and historic crossing point for ancient track ways such as the Icknield Way. The proposed development area at Newtown is located some 500m to the south of the Little Ouse River on flat ground at c17m OD within the area of the modern expansion to the town with No 1 Newtown being a house of a 1920s/1930s date.

1.3 While the medieval core of Thetford lies to the north of the Little Ouse River, the late Saxon town was larger with probably the main part being on the southern bank under what is now Newtown and adjacent areas. Chance archaeological discoveries from earlier in the 20th century close to the Bury Road plus various excavations in the middle of the century have confirmed the presence of a well preserved and densely occupied later Saxon settlement. The site for the proposed semi-detached houses being the southern part of the garden of No 1 Newtown where a large Thetford Type Ware pot of late Saxon date was recovered as a casual find in 1937 (HER- 5883). As noted above various archaeological excavations were carried out in this part of Thetford in the mid 20th century with the closest area examined being 'Site 2 North' which was 40m south-east of the proposed development area (Rogerson & Dallas, 1984). This excavation recorded various structures of late Saxon date flanking a north-west to south-east aligned road (ibid. 1984, 5) and the projection of this road line would take it through, or at least very close, to the development plot formed by the division of the rear garden of No 1 Newtown. Further archaeological excavations were carried out some 250m north of No 1 Newtown in the 1960s confirming that the late Saxon town covered an extensive area with the total, excavated sample of Thetford for this period being a very small part of what was undoubtedly one of the major urban settlements in the England in the 9th to 11th century period.

2. Monitoring methodology

2.1 The mechanical excavation of the foundation trenches (see Fig. 2) was undertaken using a 180⁰ wheeled machine equipped with a 700mm wide bucket on

what is a particularly constrained site with the development footprint covering an area of 94m² within a plot of 180m². Therefore spoil could not be stockpiled nearby in any quantity for examination but was loaded straight into lorries and taken away from the site though it was possible to search through occasional machine bucket piles as the day progressed so as to gain some idea of the density of archaeological finds within the subsoil. In total 46m of 700mm wide foundation trench (see Fig. 2) was observed as it was excavated though the trenches could not be entered as they were 1500mm to 1800mm deep in potentially unstable ground with one major and occasional minor trench collapse being noted. Opportunities for detailed examination of the exposed deposits was therefore limited and largely relied on observation from the ground level above. The soak away pit excavated close to the eastern boundary of the development plot was not as deep and this was entered and cleaned by hand. A series of digital images (see Appendix I) and monochrome photographs were taken to record the ground works.

3. Results

3.1 The foundation trenches revealed a common deposit profile across the site comprising 300mm of topsoil lying over 600/800mm of a mid brown sandy loam subsoil which in turn lay over 500/600mm of lighter brown sandy subsoil (see Appendix I- Images). Little differentiation could be seen within the exposed trench sides and no clear evidence could be seen of the naturally occurring glaciofluvial sands and gravels that can be expected in this area though towards the eastern side of the footprint hints of yellow sand were visible. As the 2m by 1m soak away pit located 7m east of the footprint revealed the underlying yellow sand with gravel at 1000mm following the removal of 300mm of topsoil and 700mm of mid brown sandy subsoil it appears that the original topography of the area was of a gentle, west facing slope as the underlying sand and gravel appears to drop away in this direction. A few late Saxon and early medieval pottery sherds were recovered from the upcast spoil that could be examined as detailed in section 4 below. However the upcast did not appear to contain any great quantity of pottery and very few bone fragments were noted.

3.2 As the underlying naturally occurring sand and gravel deposits were only exposed in the soak away, where no finds or features were observed, and not in the foundation trenches no archaeological features of any antiquity were revealed. However in the north-eastern corner of the foundation trenches an infilled air raid shelter of World War II date was revealed in the northern trench profile (see Appendix I- Images) with an exposed dimension of some 3.8m. This air raid shelter had been constructed with corrugated iron sheeting which, presumably, had been supported by a wooden frame. The top of the shelter was at 600mm below ground level with the base being at 1500mm and the structure extended to the north into what is still the garden for No 1 Newtown. The material used to fill the shelter comprised soil and rubble which was largely unconsolidated and a major trench collapse occurred in this area of the trenching.

4. The Pottery (Sue Anderson)

4.1 Twenty-six sherds weighing 411g were collected from spoil 0001. Table 1 shows the quantities of pottery by fabric. Rim types follow Anderson (2004).

Fabric	Code	No	Wt	Notes	Date
Thetford Ware	THET	1	20	medium AB jar rim type 3 (140mm diam) with diamond rouletting on body	L.9th-11th c.
Thetford Ware	THET	1	7	medium AB jar rim type 4 (140mm diam)	L.10th-11th c.
Thetford Ware	THET	1	6	medium AB jar rim type 7 (120mm diam)	11th c.
Thetford Ware	THET	15	216	undecorated body sherds	LSax
Thetford Ware	THET	3	136	large storage vessel body sherds with applied strips	LSax
Thetford Ware	THET	1	4	body sherd, diamond rouletting	LSax
Thetford Ware	THET	2	12	base fragments, sagging	LSax
St Neot's Ware	STNE	2	10	body sherds, 1 vessel	11th c.
Total		26	411		

Table 1. Pottery by fabric

All pottery was of Late Saxon date and included elements suggesting that the entire period is represented in the assemblage. Three jar rims were present, all medium 'AB' types (Dallas 1984). A type 3 example with rouletted decoration at the shoulder was the earliest form. There was an intermediate type 4 rim and a later type 7 rim. Decorated body sherds included another rouletted example and there were three sherds from large storage vessels with applied thumbled strips. One of these showed signs of internal ware, as is common with these large jars. The Thetford Ware sherds were all in similar pale to dark grey medium sandy fabrics, with no evidence of non-Thetford products being present amongst the sandy wares.

Two body sherds of St Neot's type ware were present – this fabric is generally thought to occur in Thetford from the 11th century. The sherds, although shelly, contained a proportion of sandy inclusions which is compatible with the suggested date.

5. Conclusion

4.1 While few conclusions can be derived from such limited ground works under site conditions where close examination of the trench sides or base was not possible the quantity of late Saxon and early medieval pottery recovered from the spoil indicates that this site is certainly within the overall area of the late Saxon town. That extensive deposits of subsoil lie over parts of the late Saxon town is clear from plates IV and VI of the excavations directed by Knocker between 1948 and 1957 (Rogerson & Dallas, 1984) and the results from No 1 Newtown fit with this deposit model. Whether archaeological features exist in the area of the site is uncertain as the foundation trenches did not reach the level where they might be identified in the underlying sand and gravel deposits but must remain a possibility. If present they will be preserved in situ.

4.2 The World War II domestic air raid shelter exposed in part of the foundation trenches is of moderate interest though it is likely that other gardens in the area may also contain such features.

John Newman Archaeological Services

(The archive for this monitoring will be lodged with the Norfolk CC Museums service under the HER Ref. ENF 126533)

Acknowledgements: JNAS would like to thank the site owner, Jody Byrne, the main contractor, Scott Paternoster and everyone else on site that helped in the smooth running of the archaeological monitoring.

References:

Anderson, S., 2004, 'The pottery', in Wallis, H., *Excavations at Mill Lane, Thetford*, E. Anglian Archaeol. 108, 67-86. Norfolk Archaeological Unit, NMS.

Dallas, C., 1984, 'The pottery', in Rogerson, A. and Dallas, C., *Excavations in Thetford 1948-59 and 1973-80*, E. Anglian Archaeol. 22, 117-66. Norfolk Archaeological Unit, NMS.

Rogerson, A. and Dallas, C., 1984 *Excavations in Thetford 1948-59 and 1973-80*, E. Anglian Archaeol. 22, 117-66. Norfolk Archaeological Unit, NMS.

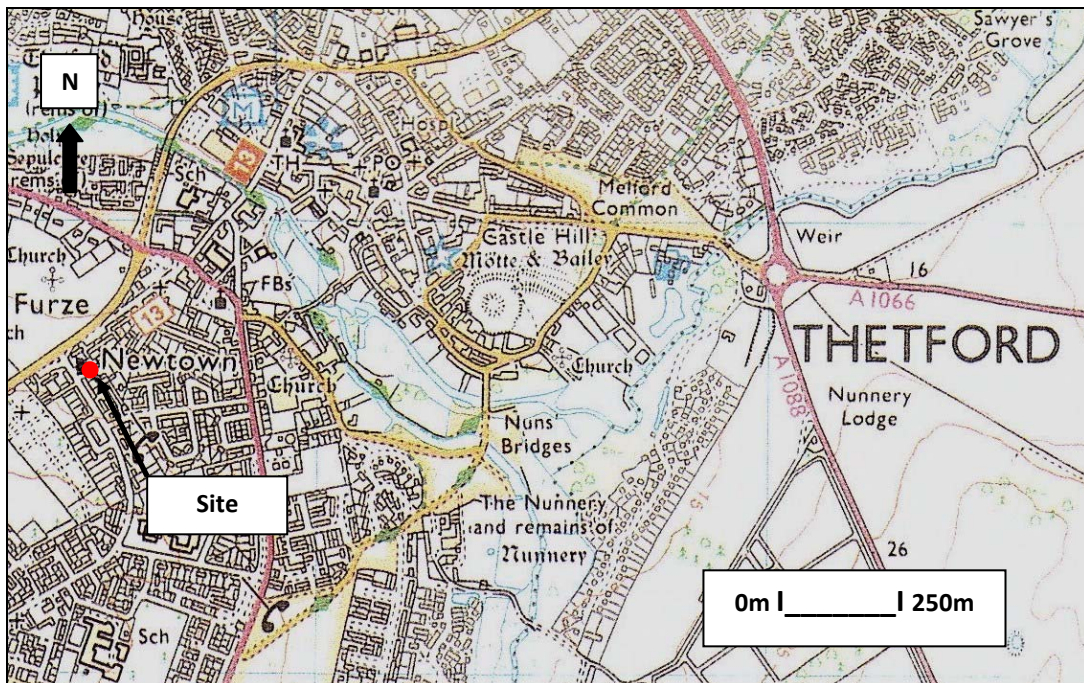


Fig. 1: Site location (Ordnance Survey © Crown copyright 2006
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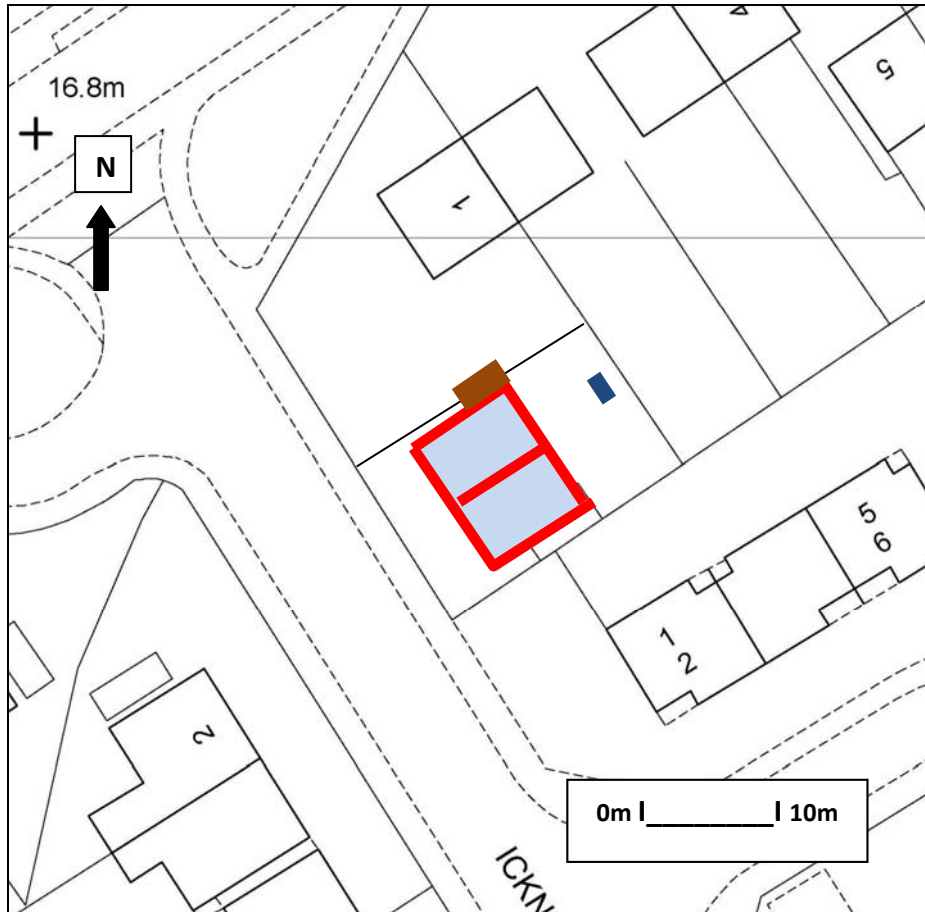


Fig. 2: Monitored foundation trenches (red)- also showing location of air raid shelter (brown) & soak away (dark blue)
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Appendix I- Images



Western foundation trench from north



Central foundation trench from east



Air raid shelter in NE corner from south-west



Air raid shelter in NE corner from east



Northern trench from west

**BRIEF
FOR THE MONITORING OF WORKS
UNDER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SUPERVISION AND CONTROL**

Site or Project Name: 1 Newtown
Parish: Thetford
Grid reference: TL 8647 8268
Norfolk HER No.: To be arranged
NLA Reference: CNF41320 Associated: Yes
Site type(s) : Housing
Planning Authority: Breckland District Council
Application or Reference No.: 3PL/2008/0495/F
Level Required Constant Attendance
Issued by: James Albone
Archaeological Planning Officer
Norfolk Landscape Archaeology
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Date: 22 September 2009
Notes: The proposed development site lies
immediately adjacent to the findspot of a
large Late Saxon pottery vessel. This brief
replaces one issued by NLA on 31/10/2007



If you need this document in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact James Albone on 01362 869279 and we will do our best to help.

THE BRIEF

The Archaeological Contractor should confirm that the Monitoring of Works Under Archaeological Supervision and Control will be undertaken in accordance with the following:

1. Provision will be made for monitoring the development, including, where appropriate, the following:-
 - all areas of below-ground disturbance, including excavations, foundation trenches, service trenches, drains and soakaways.
 - above-ground remains when the development affects a building of historic importance
 - pipeline and cable trenches.
2. Monitoring will be undertaken at the level indicated i.e. occasional visit, regular visit or constant attendance.
3. Where appropriate, topsoil or spoil will be scanned by metal-detector before and during its removal.
4. All archaeological contexts and artefacts exposed, examined or excavated will be fully recorded on appropriate context, finds and sample sheets, on plans and sections and by photographic record.
5. Provision will be made for an appropriate level of analysis, including identification of artefacts, specialist reports if appropriate, production of archive and report, donation of finds to an appropriate museum, transfer and storage of artefacts and archive in an acceptable form to an appropriate museum, conservation and inclusion of the results of the project in the County Historic Environment Record.
6. Indicate that any areas of environmental potential will be sampled, as advised by the environmental specialist.
7. The results will be presented in a report, the nature of which should be commensurate with the findings.
8. The report should include appropriate scale plans showing the locations of all features and finds, and detailed plans and sections where necessary.
9. The report should include comprehensive details of all finds.
10. Three hard copies and a PDF copy on CD of the Report should be supplied to NLA for the attention of the Head of Archaeological Planning within eight weeks of the completion of the fieldwork on the understanding that this will become a public document after an appropriate period of time (generally not exceeding six months). Two hard copies and the PDF file will be deposited with the Norfolk Historic Environment Record, and the third hard copy will be forwarded to the Local Planning Authority.
11. At the start of work (immediately before fieldwork commences) an OASIS online record <http://ads.ac.uk/project/oasis/> must be initiated and key fields completed on Details, Location and Creators forms. When the project is completed, all parts of the OASIS online form must be completed for submission to the Norfolk Historic Environment Record. This will include an uploaded .pdf version of the entire report. Hard copies of the report must still be provided as specified.
12. Hard copies of the report must also be provided, as specified below.
13. All works will be carried out in full accordance with the appropriate sections of Gurney, D., 2003, '**Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England**', as adopted by the Association of Local Government

Archaeological Officers for the East of England Region and published as *East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 14*. This is available as a PDF file on the web at www.eaareports.org.uk. Archaeological Contractors should note that the **Standards** document stipulates basic *methodological* standards. It is considered axiomatic that all contractors will strive to achieve the highest possible *qualitative* standards, with the application of the most advanced and appropriate techniques possible within a context of continuous improvement aimed at maximising the recovery of archaeological data and contributing to the development of a greater understanding of Norfolk's historic environment. Monitoring officers will seek and expect clear evidence of commitment to the historic resource of Norfolk, with specifications being drawn up within a context of added value.

14. The Archaeological Contractor will contact the HER Officer of NLA in advance of work starting to obtain a HER number for the site or, if a number is already given on the Brief, to ensure that it is still applicable.

THE MONITORING OF WORKS UNDER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SUPERVISION AND CONTROL

This means that you will need to commission an archaeological contractor to ensure that an archaeologist is present during certain phases of the development to record any features exposed or any archaeological finds.

This does not mean that the development programme will be stopped or delayed by the archaeologist, who will work alongside other contractors on site to ensure that any necessary archaeological records are made.

In the unlikely event of the discovery of unanticipated remains of very great importance, discussions will take place on how these might be preserved or recorded.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

You should forward a copy of this Brief to one or more Archaeological Contractors, and discuss with them the timing and costs. Your appointed contractor should be asked to confirm in writing to Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA) that this brief will be adhered to.

NLA does not see Contractors' costings, nor do we give advice on costs. You may wish to obtain a number of quotations or to employ the services of an archaeological consultant.

Details of archaeological contractors based in Norfolk and beyond may be found in the Institute for Archaeologists Yearbook & Directory, available from the I.f.A., University of Reading, 2 Earley Gate, PO Box 239, Reading RG6 6AU. Tel: 0118 931 6446. Fax: 0118 931 6448. Email: admin@archaeologists.net. Website: www.archaeologists.net.

FOR FURTHER HELP, INFORMATION AND ADVICE CONTACT

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Norfolk Landscape Archaeology is responsible for safeguarding the County's archaeological heritage. NLA is consulted by Planning Authorities and provides advice on archaeological work that may be required as a result of development proposals.