Archaeological Watching Brief

Heacham River Resoration
at
At Caley Mill, Heacham

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HW Report No. 142

Project name	**Heacham River Restoration, Heacham Mill**
Client	**Norfolk Rivers Trust**
NHER Event No	**ENF 133680**
Grid reference	**TF 6855 3748**
Date of fieldwork	**3rd March 2014**

Introduction

The Norfolk Rivers Trust are undertaking works to improve the Heacham River, North Norfolk (Figure 1). Part of this project required alterations to an earthwork bank along the north side of the mill leat at Caley Mill, Heacham. Norfolk Historic Environment Service issued a Brief requesting that the works be carried out under archaeological supervision and control and that, specifically, a section through the mill leat bank should be recorded.

Geology

(http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html)

The underlying solid geology of the site is the Snettisham Clay Member consisting of clay and silt. This sedimentary rock was formed approximately 125 to 130 million years ago in the Cretaceous Period within shallow seas where sediments such as mud, silt, sand and gravel were deposited.

The superficial geological deposits consisting of clay, silt, sand and gravel were formed up to 3 million years ago in the Quaternary Period from material accumulated by down slope movements including landslide, debris flow, solifluction, soil creep and hill wash.

Archaeological Background

A mill has been present on this site at Heacham from at least the late 18th-century as indicated on Faden's map of 1797. The present carrstone watermill however is slightly later in date. Norfolk Mills website (http://www.norfolkmills.co.uk/Watermills/heacham.html) records that the earlier mill was rebuilt *c.*1837 when a new embanked pool and leat were also created.

The Norfolk Historic Environment Record indicates that an extensive area of earthworks once existed to the north of the mill along the Heacham River. These are thought to represent a system of post-medieval drainage ditches possibly acting as water meadows (NHER 62835).

Methods

A single visit was made to site at the commencement of the works. A single trench was excavated by machine across the bank to the north of the mill leat to the maximum depth and width required for the river restoration works. Archaeological deposits within this trench were recorded. The removal of other soils along part of the length of the bank was also monitored.

All works were carried out in full accordance with national and regional guidelines for the treatment of archaeological remains, and in particular the guidance set out in *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003) and the *Institute of Field Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (2001).

Results

(Figures 2 and 3, Plate 1)

The maximum depth of soils recorded was 0.65m and removed only the upper deposits of the bank. The lowest deposit revealed was a mid orange silty sand with moderate chalk flecks and occasional flint (03). This was only noted in a small area towards the leat side of the bank and is firmer than the overlying deposits. Above this lay a dark yellow brown slightly clayey silt with occasional chalk fragments, lumps of grey clay, brick/tile fragments and flints (02). To the north, and probably overlying this was a deposit of pale yellow brown clayey silt with occasional chalk lump (06). Above this on the north side of the bank was a deposit of crumbly light yellow brown clay/silt loam (07). The topsoil across the bank was a dark brown, inclusion free, silt (01). Cutting through the bank was a modern trench carrying an electricity cable (**04**). The cut for this was difficult to identify with certainty as the fill (05) was similar to, but slightly more mixed than the surrounding deposits. No artefacts were recovered.

Overall the excavations were not deep enough to reveal the core of the post-medieval leat bank. The recorded deposits formed the upper layers of the bank and were surprisingly soft and uncompacted in nature.

Appendix 1

Context List

Context	Category	Date
01	Topsoil	Modern
02	Bank make-up	Post-medieval
03	Bank make-up	Post-medieval
04	Cut – cable trench	Modern
05	Fill – cable trench	Modern
06	Bank make-up	Post-medieval
07	Bank make-up	Post-medieval

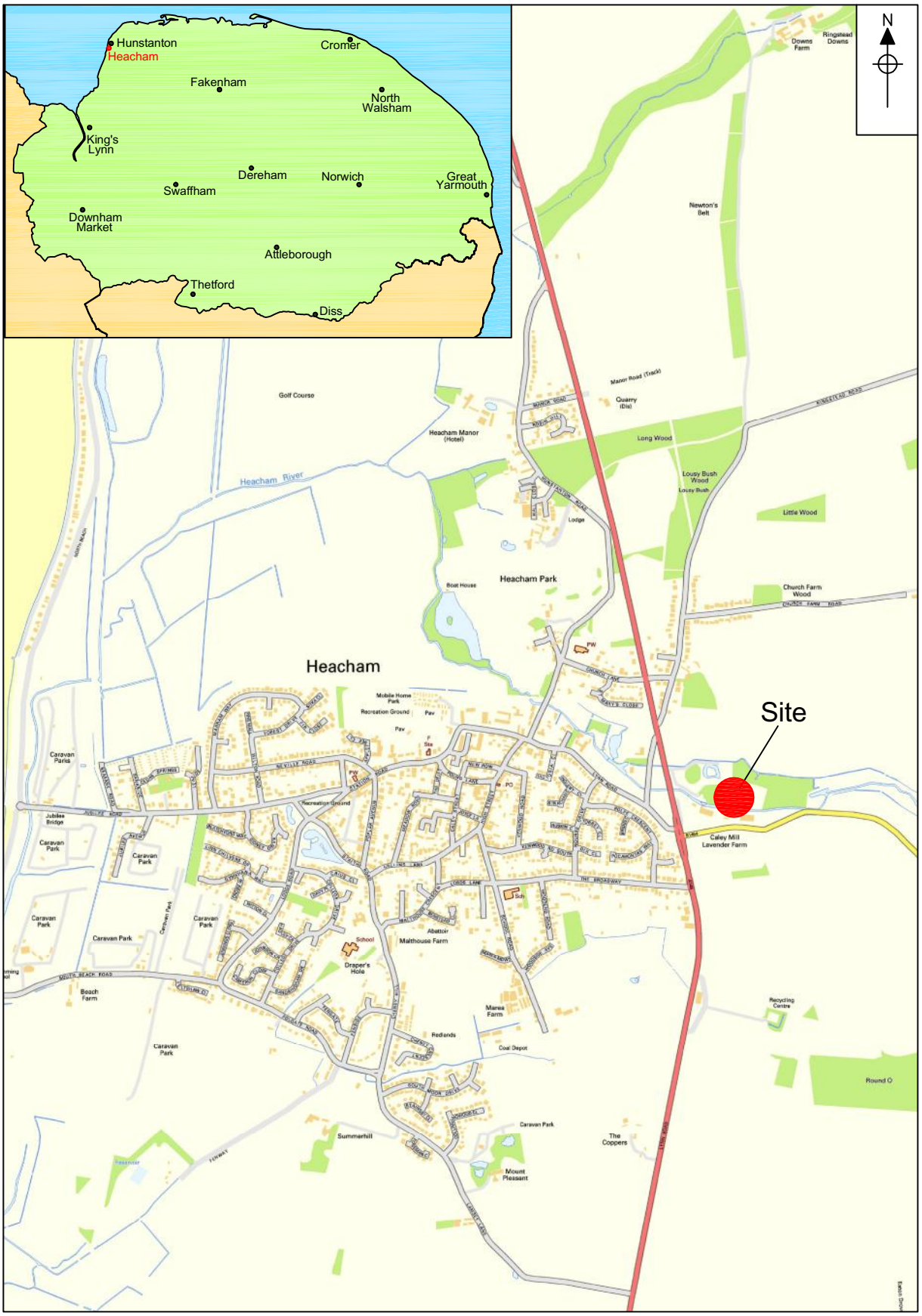

Figure 1. Site location.

Figure 2. Plan showing line of works and location of recorded section.

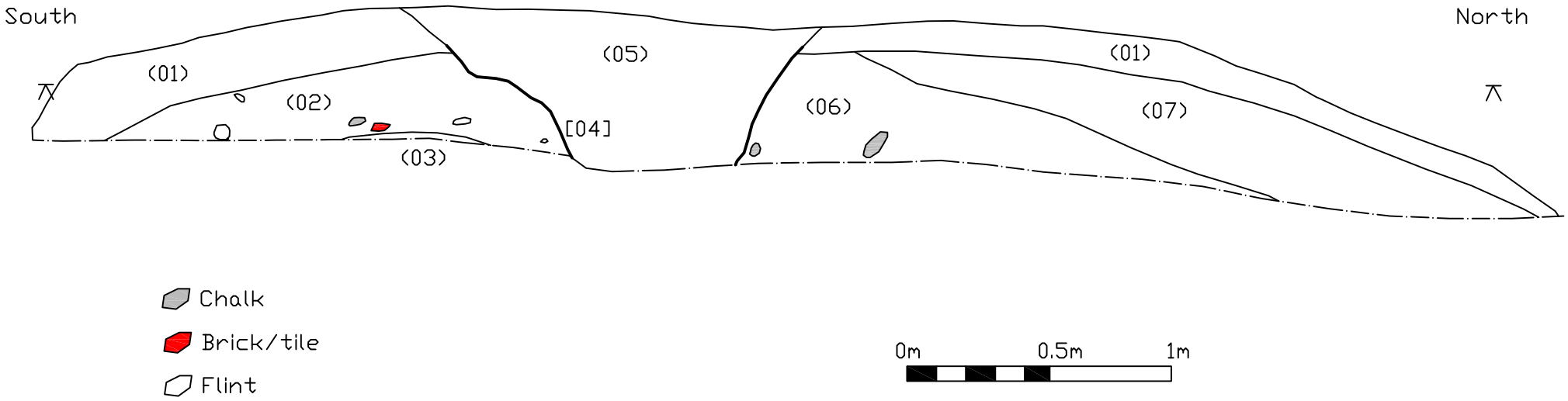

Figure 3. East facing section through bank.

Plate 1. Work in progress. Recorded section in foreground.
Scale 2x1m, looking North.