
Breaking New Ground
Weeting Heath and Santon Street

**Monitoring of Works under Archaeological
Supervision and Control**

ENF 138940
And
ENF 138941

Heather Wallis
May 2016

HW Report No. 185

Project name	Breaking New Ground
Parishes	Weeting with Broomhill and Lyndford
Event No.	ENF 138940 and ENF 138941
Grid Ref.	TL 7588 8815 and TL8172 8828
Date of Work	28th September 2015, 15th November 2015 and 31st March 2016

Introduction

The Brecklands of East Anglia is an area characterised by sandy soils with heathlands, and both mixed and coniferous plantations. Disturbances to the ground replicate the practice of occasional cultivation which has traditionally been practiced in the Brecks and allows the diversity of species, dependant on ground disturbance to be encouraged. As part of the Breaking New Ground Landscape Partnership ground disturbance work was proposed at fourteen sites of which two are within areas of archaeological potential (Weeting Heath and Santon Street). These sites were identified through an assessment of known historic and archaeological sites in the vicinity of all the areas of proposed ground disturbance (Robertson 2015). A Brief for Programme of Archaeological Works was issued by Norfolk Historic Environment Service (3rd August 2015) and a Method Statement for Archaeological Monitoring (Wallis August 2015) was submitted to and approved by Norfolk Historic Environment Service. This outlined the archaeological monitoring works to be carried out at Weeting Heath and Santon Street (Fig. 1), the results of which are presented in this report.

The aim of the archaeological monitoring was to recover as many artefacts as possible from the sites, and to record any revealed archaeological deposits, in order to inform on the date, nature and character of the sites.

Weeting Heath

Location, Topography and Geology

The site is some 2km west of the village of Weeting and on the western fringes of Thetford Forest (Fig. 1). It lay on the gentle slope of the Little Ouse valley c.1.2km north of the river at c.7m OD. The land continues to rise to the north to a maximum of 25m OD

The bedrock geology is Holywell Nodular Chalk Formation and New Pit Chalk Formation which formed 89 to 100 million years ago in the Cretaceous Period.

The superficial geology is Head clay, silt, sand and gravel which formed from material accumulated by down slope movements of material up to 3 million years ago in the Quaternary Period.

<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>

Archaeological Background

A search of the Norfolk Historic Environment Record was undertaken for a 1km radius of the site. This returned 40 records.

The site at Weeting Heath lay in an archaeologically rich location. Worked flints, including tools and waste flakes, have been found dating to all prehistoric periods. These include a Palaeolithic hand-axe and a Mesolithic mace-head as well as many tools from the Neolithic. A Bronze Age barrow lay to the north of the site. A track, the East Harling Drove, crosses the search area east to west. This track is thought to be of prehistoric origin with some parts of it remaining in use up to the post-medieval period.

A large Roman settlement (NHER 5587) lay to the south of the site. Small scale excavations were undertaken here in the 1950s and 1960s and aerial photographs have shown a regularly laid out street pattern (Gurney 1986, 49-92). Close to the monitored area quantities of Roman tile have been recovered through fieldwalking (NHER 39316) indicating that this was probably the site of a Roman building.

To the west of the site is the ditch and bank earthwork of the Fossditch which runs on a north to south alignment. This dates to the Early Saxon period, as does a small cemetery site located further west.

Occasional finds of medieval date have been recorded from the search area and Methwold Warren, a medieval rabbit warren, is located to the north-west. Post-medieval activity is also present with evidence of a brick kiln and areas of quarrying apparent, along with occasional finds of this period.

Methods

Turf and some topsoil was removed under archaeological supervision from two areas (Fig. 2, Plates 1-3), using a machine fitted with flat-bladed bucket. The northern area measured c.90m x 7.7m and covered c.650m² and the southern area measured c.94m x 7.9m and covered c.580m². Metal-detecting and monitoring for finds was undertaken prior to, during and after the machine excavation. Recovered artefacts were located using a Total Station Theodolite.

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* (2014).

Work was carried out over one bright early autumn day on 28th September 2015.

Results of the Archaeological Monitoring

Turf and soils (01) were removed to a depth of c.0.15m, in some areas this revealed the underlying natural sand (02) while across most of the area some of the topsoil deposit remained.

The topsoil was a dark orangey brown fine silty sand with moderate medium and small flints. The underlying natural was a dark brownish orange slightly silty fine sand with moderate chalk fragments. The natural chalk was visible in the weathered side of an adjacent extraction pit and was seen to be no more than c.0.5m below the present ground surface.

Metal-detector signals before the removal of the turf proved to be pieces of rabbit wire. The eastern edge of the site, nearest to the fenced boundary, had previously been disturbed for the insertion of a rabbit-proof fence. Much of the area had also been disturbed by burrowing.

No artefacts were revealed by the machining however metal-detecting of the revealed soil horizon produced five artefacts. These consisted of one iron object, 2 spent gun cartridges, one copper alloy ring (eyelet) and one button. All are 20th century in date.

Santon Street

Location, Topography and Geology

The area of works lay in Thetford Forest midway between Thetford and Brandon and some 6km east of the site at Weeting Heath (Fig. 1). It was located on the north bank of the Little Ouse River separated from the river by the Norwich to Ely railway and lay at c.10m OD, with the gently rising valley slopes to the north obscured by the trees of the forest.

The topography of the area is undulating; formed by a number of low ridges running perpendicular to the river which were probably formed by hillwash.

The bedrock geology is Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation which formed 86 to 94 million years ago in the Cretaceous Period. The superficial geology in the base of the valley is peat formed up to 3 million years ago in the Quaternary Period. Alongside this are River Terrace Deposits of sand and gravel of the

flood plain. The geology away from the valley is Cover Sand, a wind-blown deposit formed up to 3 million years ago in the Quaternary Period.

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

Archaeological Background

A search of the Norfolk Historic Environment Record was undertaken for a 1km radius of the monitoring sites. This returned 50 records.

The site at Santon Street is set in landscape rich in prehistoric activity. One site with evidence of Mesolithic activity (NHER 13340) is located to the south-west. There are many sites which have produced artefacts, both tools and waste flakes dating to the Neolithic period. Evidence for both flint working sites and occupation in this period have also been identified. A Bronze Age socketed axe was found north-east of the site (NHER 40854). East Harling Drove, a trackway of probable prehistoric origin crosses the area from east to west (NHER 5435). Additionally, Grimes Graves lay just 1.5km to the north.

Within the search area four sites have produced evidence of Roman date. One, which lay just to the north of the monitored area, is that of a probable Roman settlement (NHER 55659). Small scale excavations were carried out here in 1919 and 1926-8. No buildings were revealed but pits dating to the 2nd-4th centuries were recorded. The other three sites have produced Roman artefacts.

Occasionally finds of Early Saxon, Late Saxon and medieval have been retrieved from the wider area. During the medieval period much of the area was a rabbit warren and many of the banks relating to this can still be seen as low earthworks.

A scattering of post-medieval finds has also been recovered including coins, tokens and buckles.

Methods

Two phases of work were undertaken. Phase 1 consisted of the hand excavation of 28 small pits (Plates 4 and 5). This was undertaken by the Friends of Thetford Forest under archaeological supervision. Metal-detecting was carried out during the excavations and the disturbed soils monitored for finds. This work was carried out on Sunday 15th November.

Phase 1 pits were hand excavated removing just the heather thatch and small quantities of topsoil. In total 28 pits were dug varying in size from 1.2m² to 1.8m². Each pit was given a unique context number (1-28) and their locations were surveyed using a Total Station Theodolite. Finds were recorded by pit number.

Twenty-five of these (Nos 1-25) were located just to the south of a low bank which is thought to be a bank associated with Santon medieval rabbit warren (NHER 54065). The remaining three were on the sides of an old extraction pit (Nos 26-28).

Phase 2 work consisted of fieldwalking a sinuous harrowed strip (Plate 6) which covered an area of c.1000m², the harrowed strip being c.590m long and 1.8m wide. Fieldwalking and metal-detecting was undertaken on Thursday 31st March after the harrowed strip had weathered for c.4 weeks. Each find was given a unique number starting at 30.

Recovered artefacts were located using a Total Station Theodolite which along with the location of the pits and harrowing are shown on Fig.3.

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* (2014).

Results of the Archaeological Monitoring

During the excavation of the pits the underlying natural subsoil was not revealed in any of the pits. The material removed was mainly heather thatch and topsoil which was a mid grey brown silty sand with frequent small and medium flints.

From the pits one struck flake (Pit 15) and one burnt flint (Pit 22) were found with a further struck flake (29) being found on the ground surface.

The eastern part of the harrowed strips ran over an undulating area. Many natural flints were noted particularly on the higher areas of the undulating ground where the soil cover was thinner.

Three struck flints were recovered (30-32) and two metal-detector signals proved to be modern tent pegs.

Santon Street Flint

By Sarah Bates

Phase 1 Pits

Two pieces of stuck flint were found at the site. One is an irregular possible flake (15); it is relatively long but has no apparent percussion bulb although it may have been struck from a 'platform' on one long side that has

subsequently been removed by further flaking which has formed a slight notch. The opposite side of the flake has been very slightly retouched and it may be that the 'notch' facilitated holding and use. Surviving areas of the surfaces of the flint from which the flake came have a white patina but otherwise the flint is unpatinated.

A small squat tertiary flake was found in the topsoil (not from an excavated pit) (29).

The flints are not closely dateable but are of prehistoric date with the irregular piece being more likely to be of later (Bronze Age or Iron Age) date.

A fragment of burnt flint, weighing 27g, was also found (22). Its 'crackled' white surface suggests it was heated and put into water as a potboiler. This also indicates a probable prehistoric date.

Phase 2 Harrowing

Three pieces of struck flint were recovered from this phase. One, a quite regular flake of smooth dark grey flint has slight abrasion of its platform edge and appears to have its distal edge broken (31). The break may be use-related; there is at least one truncated flake scar, struck from that edge which may have been due to use or retouch of the edge. A small notch in the right lateral edge may also be deliberate retouch or use-related and some other edge damage might be use-related as the other side of the flake is quite sharp. The quite regular, and relatively large size of the flake, as well as the treatment of the platform edge, suggests it is of Neolithic date but this is uncertain.

Another, more squat, hard hammer struck flake has a notch, formed by retouch, in its right lateral edge (32). The third struck fragment may be from an irregular core; it has been struck from one side of a ridge and another struck edge suggests the piece was bifacially struck although most of one 'face' has broken off (30). Some slight retouch of another edge post-dates the apparent breakage.

The flints are not closely dateable but they are most likely to be of later Neolithic, or later, date.

Overall Conclusions

Despite both sites being located close to known archaeological sites the quantity of finds recovered was disappointingly low. At Weeting Heath just five artefacts all of 20th-century date were recovered. At Santon Street five struck flints and one burnt flint fragment were found. They are later Neolithic, Bronze Age or later in date.

Bibliography

- Gurney, D., 1986, *Settlement, Religion and Industry on the Roman Fen-edge, Norfolk*, East Anglian Archaeology 31, 49-92
- Robertson, D. 2015 *Historic Environment Assessment of Ground Disturbance Sites in Norfolk*

Acknowledgements

Works at Weeting Heath were co-ordinated by Paul Waterhouse of the Norfolk Wildlife Trust, while at Santon Street works were facilitated by Neal Armour-Chelu and Rachel Riley of the Forestry Commission. The test pit excavations were undertaken by members of the Friends of Thetford Forest.

Thanks must also be extended to my colleagues; John Percival for his help on site, particularly with the site surveying, and to Sarah Bates for reporting of the worked flints.



Figure 1. Site location plan

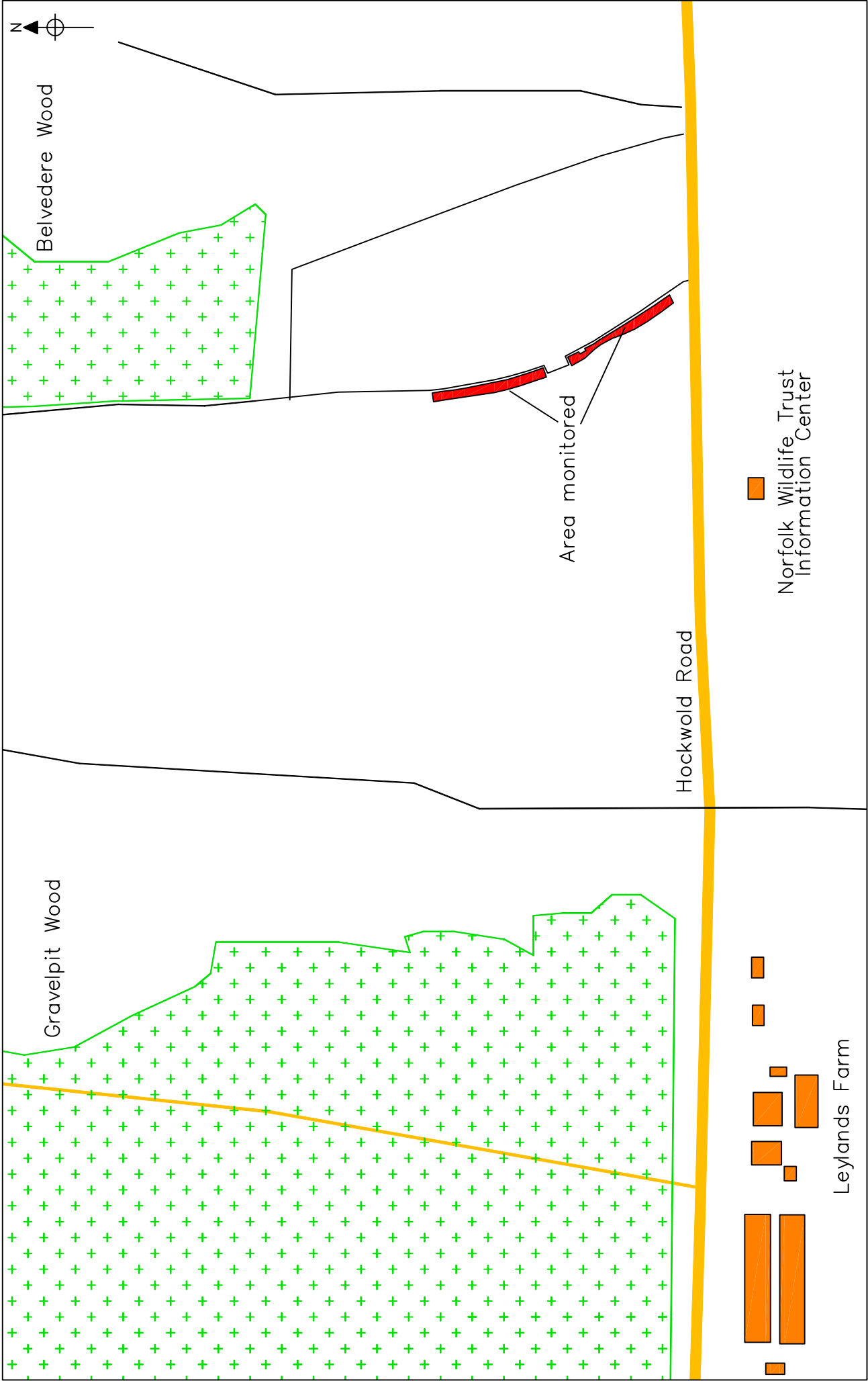


Figure 2. Weeting Heath. Scale 1:4000.

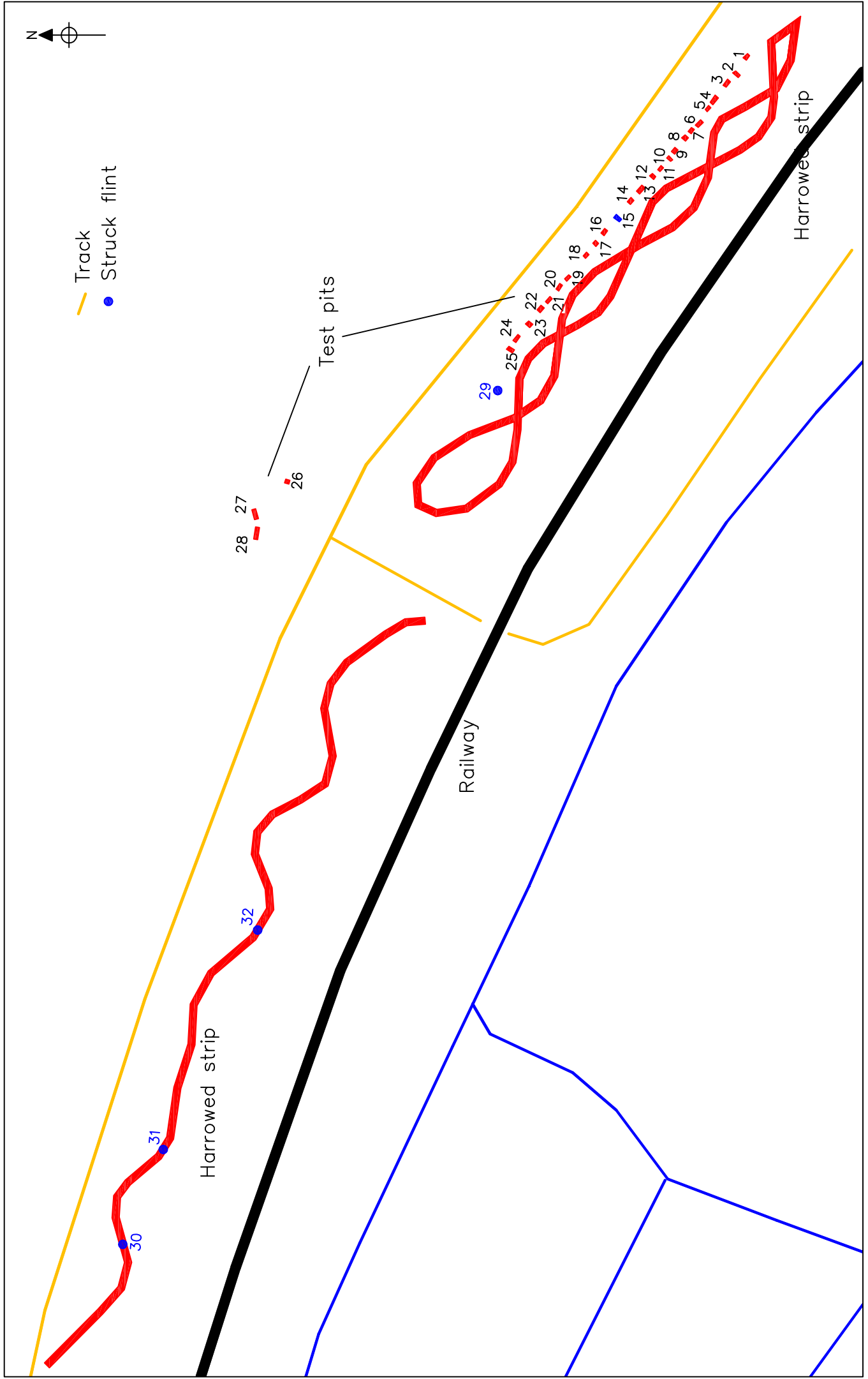


Figure 3. Santon Street. Scale 1:1250.



Plate 1. Weeting at start of works, looking North.



Plate 2. Metal detecting at Weeting, looking South.



Plate 3. Weeting with works almost complete, looking South



Plate 4. Santon test pits, looking West.



Plate 5. Excavating Santon test pits, looking East.



Plate 6. View of harrowed strip, looking West.

Appendix 1

Weeting Heath

ENF138940

Context List

Ctxt No.	Category
01	Topsoil
02	Natural

Finds List

Find No..	Material	Object		Date
01	Iron	object		Modern
02	CuA		gun cartridge	Modern
03	CuA		gun cartridge	Modern
04	CuA	ring	eyelet	Modern
05	CuA	button		Modern

Appendix 2

Santon Street

ENF138941

Context List

Contexts 1-28 Phase 1 test pit number
Context 29 Phase 1 unstratified find
Contexts 30-32 Phase 2 finds numbers

Finds List

Pit/Find No..	Material	Category	Notes
15	Flint	Retouched flake	
22	Flint	Not struck	burnt
29	Flint	Flake	
30	Flint	Core/tool fragment	
31	Flint	Retouched flake	
32	Flint	Notched flake	

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OASIS ID: heatherw1-229307

Project details

Project name	Breaking New Ground
Short description of the project	At Weeting Heath and Santon Street, Norfolk, work was carried out on Norfolk Wildlife Trust and Forestry Commission land to enhance plant species diversity. As both these sites lay close to known archaeological sites monitoring was undertaken. At Weeting topsoil strip was supervised and metal detected. Only finds of late 20th-century date were recovered. At Santon Street twenty-eight small pits were excavated by volunteers and a strip of land was harrowed. These areas were monitored, fieldwalked and metal detected. Just five struck flints and one burnt flint, all of later prehistoric date, were recovered.
Project dates	Start: 14-09-2015 End: 31-03-2016
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	ENF138940 - HER event no.
Any associated project reference codes	ENF138941 - HER event no.
Type of project	Recording project
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	STRUCK FLINT Late Prehistoric
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"

Project location

Country	England
Site location	NORFOLK BRECKLAND WEETING WITH BROOMHILL Breaking New Ground Weeting Heath
Site location	NORFOLK BRECKLAND WEETING WITH BROOMHILL Breaking New Ground Santon Street
Study area	0 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 7588 8815 52.462499304626 0.589203853818 52 27 45 N 000 35 21 E Point
Site coordinates	TL 8166 8831 52.462036660654 0.674281826868 52 27 43 N 000 40 27 E Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Heather Wallis
Project brief originator	Local Planning Authority (with/without advice from County/District Archaeologist)
Project design originator	Heather Wallis
Project director/manager	Heather Wallis

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Norfolk Museums Service
Physical Contents	"Worked stone/lithics"
Digital Archive recipient	Norfolk Museums Service
Digital Contents	"Stratigraphic","other"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Norfolk Museums Service
Paper Contents	"Stratigraphic","other"
Paper Media available	"Miscellaneous Material","Report"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Breaking New Ground: Weeting Heath and Santon Street. Monitoring of Works under Archaeological Supervision and Control.
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Wallis, H.
Other bibliographic details	HW Report No. 185
Date	2016
Issuer or publisher	H Wallis
Place of issue or publication	Norwich
Entered by	Heather Wallis (archaeology@hwallis.co.uk)
Entered on	13 May 2016

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