An Archaeological Evaluation of land proposed for a Manège at The Stables, Church Road, Bergh Apton, Norfolk.

Prepared for Karen Rose

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Location:	Bergh Apton
Grid Ref:	TG 3060 0028
NHES Event No:	ENF132159
Date of fieldwork:	30th July 2013

1.0 Introduction

Norvic Archaeology was commissioned by Karen Rose to undertake an evaluation by trial trench of land proposed for a Manège within an open field at 'The Stables' off Church Road, Bergh Apton, Norfolk (issued application number 2013/0990 prior to temporary withdrawal).

The rectangular plot proposed for the Manège measures 20m by 40m and is located in the north-west corner of an open field currently used for equine activities. The site is located close to an Early Saxon Cemetery, of which sixty-three graves were excavated in advance of gravel working during 1973.

The archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a brief issued by the Historic Environment Service (HES Ref: CNF45079_1) on behalf of South Norfolk Council. The aim of the evaluation work was to assess the presence/absence, date, nature, and extent of any buried archaeological remains and features. This report presents a brief description of the methodology followed, the results and the archaeological interpretation of the evaluation.

On completion of the project, the site archive will be offered for long term deposition with Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, following the relevant policy on archiving standards.

2.0 Summary of Results

A single 1.8m by 20m evaluation trench was excavated down to natural geology with no archaeological features revealed.

A small assemblage of finds was collected from the subsoil, which appears to have been well mixed through 19th century ploughing. The finds include late post-medieval buttons, metal working debris, a possible fragment from a Romano-British fastener or harness fitting, two abraded sherds of Romano-British pottery and an assemblage of Late Bronze Age worked flint – which includes an exhausted core and a side-scraper.

The finds are consistent with residual evidence for both prehistoric and Romano-British activity in the general area of the site. A focus of Romano-British activity in the form of a possible high status farm or villa is known to be located c. 185m to the south east and a Bronze Age cremation burial was discovered in a similar location.

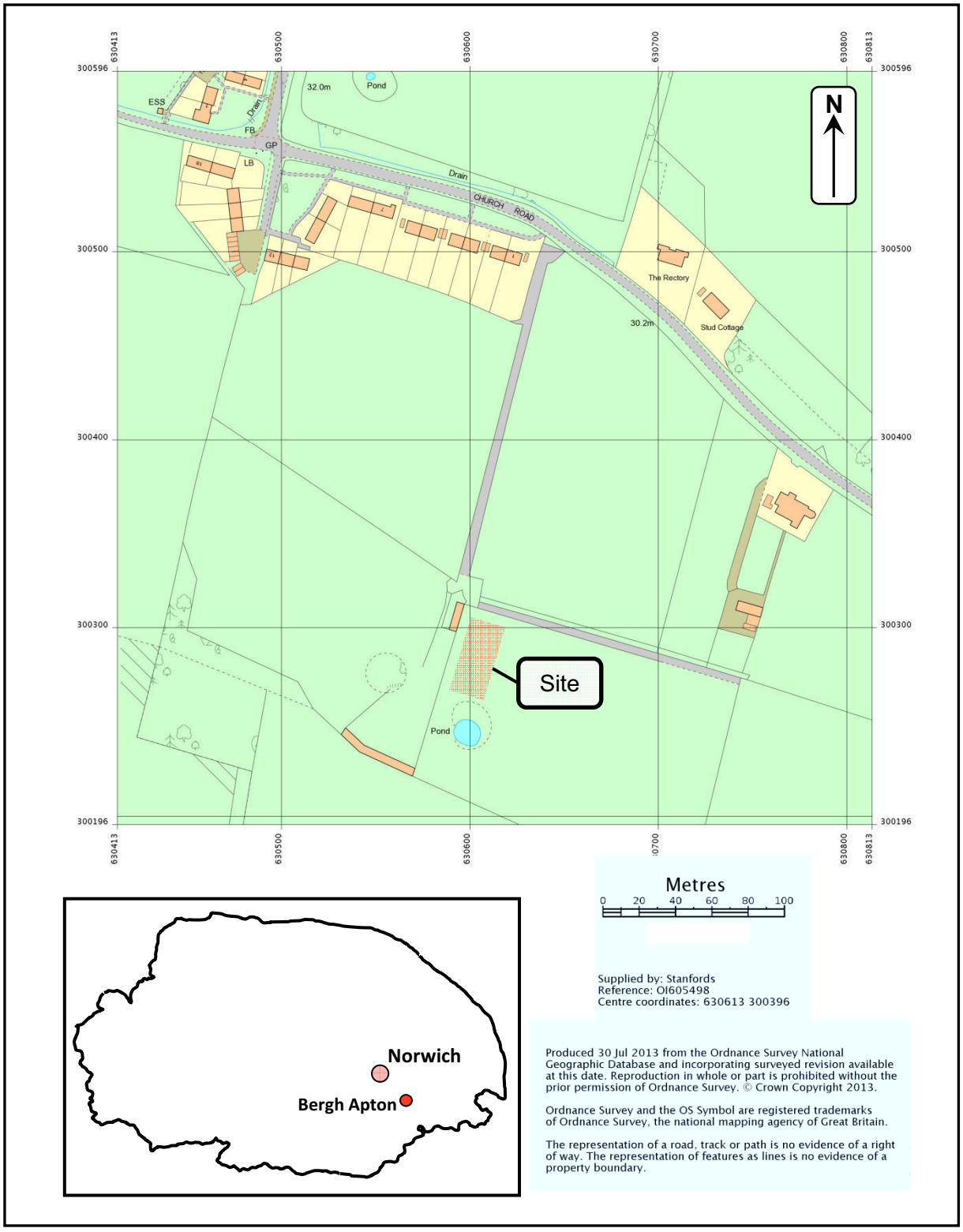

Figure 1: Site Location Plan

3.0 Geology and Topography

The site is located within fields off the southern side of Church Street, Bergh Apton. Topographically the site lies at c. 32.5m OD on the northern side of a small hill located on the northern valley side of the Well Beck, one of the main tributary streams of the River Chet.

The underlying geology is sand and gravel of the Norwich Crag series, while the surrounding region is covered by mainly heavy boulder clay. Superficial deposits comprise of chalky till and sand/gravel outwash deposits to the immediate north with gravel rich deposits to the immediate south, an area formerly subject to intensive gravel extraction
- Geology of Britain Viewer at a scale of 1:50 000
(http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyviewer_google/googleviewer.html)

The sub-surface geology of the site encountered during the fieldwork can be characterised as mid-yellow sandy clay with frost-fractured flints above a dense, mid-orange slightly sandy clay.

4.0 Brief Archaeological and Historical Background

The site is located in east Norfolk, in the parish of Bergh Apton, which lies amongst a relatively rich historic landscape that has provided evidence of human occupation from all historic periods.

A parish summary of the large amount of information held for Bergh Apton's Historic Environment can be viewed on the Norfolk Heritage Explorer website. The parish has generated over eighty records which give evidence of human occupation and activity of most periods in the form of find scatters, cropmarks, listed buildings and excavated sites.

The 1st Edition OS Plan of 1887 shows that field boundaries have changed very little in well over a century. A pair of gravel pits are marked, both of which now serve as ponds, one of which is situated to the immediate south of the proposed manège. A similar arrangement of fields is also shown on earlier 19th century tithe and enclosure plans, although only the pit in the adjacent field is depicted in the form of a small pond.

Most significantly, the site is located just 80m to the north of an Early Saxon Cemetery site, much of which appears to have been destroyed through gravel workings in the 1970s.

The following extract from the online parish summary was compiled by Sarah Spooner (NLA) in August 2005 and summarises evidence for much past human activity found in the parish:

> *The parish of Bergh Apton, in South Norfolk, was once two settlements, Bergh, from the Old English meaning a 'hill or mound', and Apton, meaning a 'farm or enclosure belonging to Api'.*
>
> *There is some evidence for early occupation in the parish; Mesolithic flints (NHER 10306), Neolithic axes (NHER 10313, 10435 and 10436) have been found scattered throughout the parish. There are a number of Bronze Age barrows in the parish, most of which are clustered in the east of the parish, next to the parish boundary. The site of a possible Roman villa (NHER 10316) is in the south of the parish, close to the site of an Early Saxon cemetery (NHER1011). Painted wall plaster, roof tile, pottery and coins have all been found at the site, but there is little other evidence for the lives of the rest of the inhabitants of Roman Bergh Apton, whose daily lives were presumably very different from those living in the villa.*

The presence of a large Early Saxon cemetery (NHER 1011) in the parish, on higher overlooking the river, suggests that a fairly substantial Saxon settlement may have ground been fairly close, but there is little other archaeological evidence from the period. Over sixty graves were excavated by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit, the first excavation ever carried out by them. Many grave goods, including a rare example of a Saxon lyre, were found during the excavation, although the preservation of skeletons was poor, due to the acidic nature of the soil.

Bergh Apton is mentioned briefly in Domesday Book, and Saxon settlement was focused on the two villages of Bergh and Apton. During the medieval period the settlement in the parish gradually shrank, to a scatter of farms and houses across the parish. The site of the deserted medieval settlement of Apton (NHER 11914) is to the south of Bergh, but the settlement was described by Blomefield as having been deserted for 'time immemorial'. St Martin's Church (NHER 10332) was in ruins by the 15th century, leaving the Church of St Peter and St Paul (NHER10462) to serve the parish

Sites in the immediate proximity (c. 500m) or of particular relevance or interest which fall in close proximity to the site include:

The following information has been sourced from the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER)

NHER 1011: ***Early Saxon inhumation cemetery*****.** An important example of an inhumation cemetery, dating to the Early Saxon period was discovered by gravel extraction in 1973 on the slopes of a hill above the Well Beck stream. In total, 63 individual graves were excavated by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit. Due to the conditions of the acidic soil, human remains were not well preserved, but a remarkable number of well-preserved grave goods were recovered, including brooches, beads, shield bosses, spear heads, a sword, rings and gilded mounts and a rare example of a Saxon lyre. The cemetery was probably much larger, but gravel extraction may have destroyed many unrecorded graves. [located c. 80m to the south]

NHER 10316 ***Site of a possible Roman villa.*** In 1955, the removal of topsoil for gravel workings c. 200m west of Town Farm led to the discovery of Roman pottery, coins, roof tiles, painted wall plaster and a highly decorated and enamelled fragment of a Roman bowl, suggesting that this is the site of a high status Roman building. The site lays just several metres to the east of an Early Saxon cemetery (NHER 1011). [c.185m SW]

NHER 12196. ***An undated brick wall*** and layers of burning were was found inside a wood, close to the site of NHER 10316, and the Early Saxon inhumation cemetery, NHER 1011 on land which became Loddon rubbish dump. [c. 140m SW]

NHER 10315: ***A Bronze Age cremation*** of a young child was found here in 1950, inside an inverted pottery urn. Sherds of Bronze Age and Roman pottery have also been found at this site, which is close to the Early Saxon cemetery NHER 1011. [c. 275m SW]

NHER 40304: ***Multi-period finds scatter****.* A Roman copper alloy key handle, an Early Saxon buckle, a medieval strap fitting and buckle, and a post medieval coin, weight and knife, have been found by metal detecting within fields to the south-east of Stud Farm. [c. 450m NE]

NHER 55510: ***Multi-period finds scatter.*** Fieldwalking west of Mere Farm in 2009 by the Caistor Roman Town Project recovered prehistoric worked flint, medieval, medieval/post-medieval and post-medieval pottery and medieval floor tile. [c. 650m W]

NHER 39933: ***Coins.*** A single medieval and a single post medieval coin have been found by metal detecting east of Town Farm. [c. 460m ESE]

NHER 10435: ***A Neolithic polished flint axehead*** was found at Valley Farm. [c. 500m SSE].

NHER 24171: ***Multi-period finds scatter***. A Bronze Age copper alloy spear head, a Roman clasp, and fragments of several Early Saxon brooches, and a medieval mount, dating to the 14th century with the initials 'S' and 'A', found by metal detecting in field on the southern side of Well Beck Road [c. 460m S].

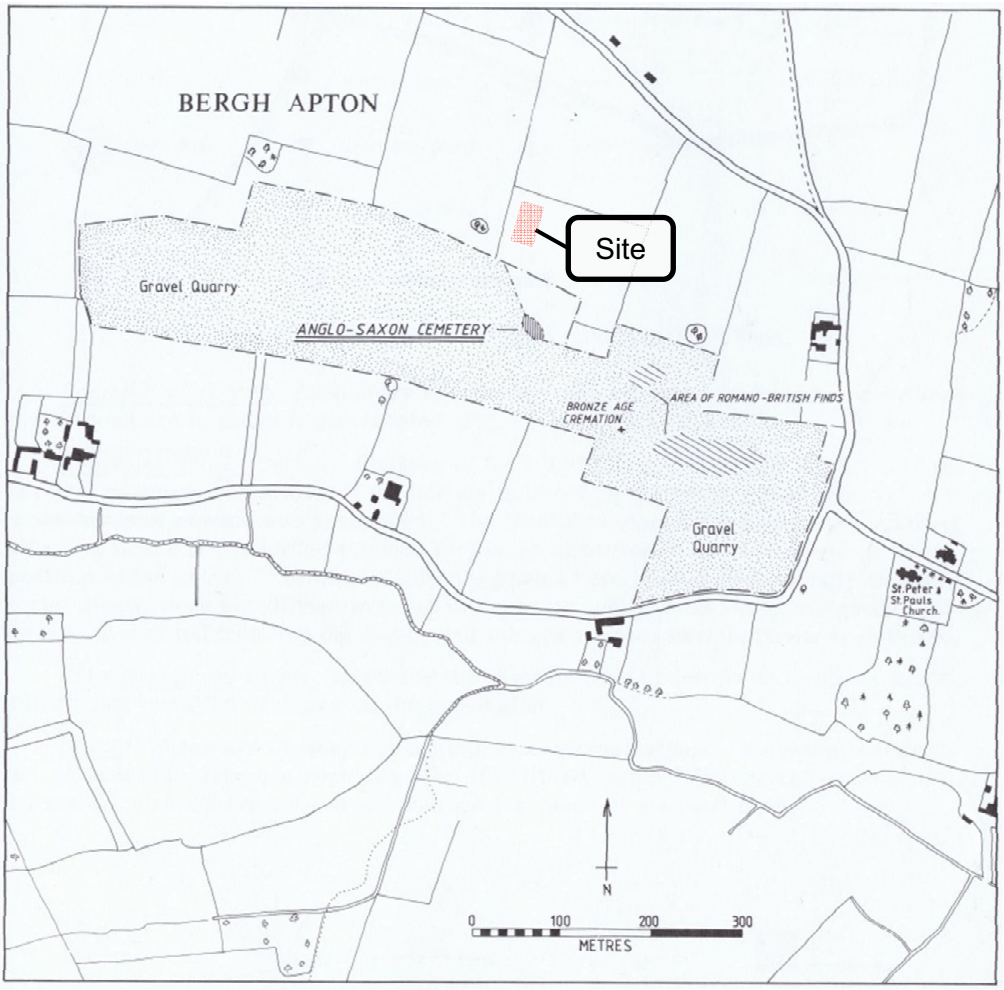

Figure 2: Site Location in relation to the Anglo-Saxon Cemetery (figure from EAA 7)

5.0 Methodology (Figure 2)

The objective of the archaeological evaluation was to record any archaeological evidence revealed during the evaluation.

As requested by the Brief, a single evaluation trench was excavated under the control of an experienced archaeologist, a tracked 7-ton 360° machine was used to carry out the reduction in a series of careful spits.

Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector (Minelab XTerra 705). All metal-detected and hand-collected finds were retained for inspection, other than those which were obviously modern.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using Norvic Archaeology *pro forma* sheets. The trench location, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and digital images were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

All levels were taken using a temporary benchmark of 30.51m OD located on the access road to The Stables, tied to an OS Spot Height of 32m OD located close to the junction of Church Road with The Street.

6.0 Results *(Appendix 1)*

- ***'Natural deposits'***

Natural geological deposits (03 & 04) were revealed at a depth of between 0.3m and 0.4m, within the confines of the evaluation trench. These comprised of a dense slightly sandy-clay (04) below a layer of sandy-clay with more frequent flints (03).

- ***Subsoil***

Above the natural was a well-mixed subsoil which may have been subject to 19th century steam ploughing, with occasional traces of modern brick and coke. The subsoil measured just 0.2m in depth. A mixture of artefact types was collected from this soil, which included prehistoric flints of Bronze Age date alongside late-post-medieval buttons.

- ***Topsoil***

Above the subsoil was an active top-soil of sandy-loam c. 0.10m deep.

7.0 Finds Analysis *(Appendix 2 & 3)*

- **Pottery**

Two sherds of Romano-British pottery were recovered from the subsoil (02). Both have suffered from severe abrasion. The larger weighs 13g and is a base sherd of Grey Ware, possibly from a storage jar or similar scale of vessel. The smaller sherd weighs just 1g but is a thin rim sherd of fine-ware in an orange fabric, abrasion having removed the colour coating. The fineness of walls and slight wave to the delicate rim may indicate a beaker vessel.

Dating such material is problematic due to the abrasion, but a mid to late Romano-British date seems likely if the Grey-Ware can be attributed to a Norfolk tradition.

- **Flint**

Ten struck flints (weighing a total of 166g) were collected during the machine reduction, along with five pieces of burnt flint. Each piece was examined by eye and with the aid of a hand lens (x6 magnification) before being catalogued according to a basic typology using standard lithic terminology where possible.

This small assemblage is made exclusively from medium grained opaque flint, with fairly frequent interclasts and flaws. The fabric is pale greyish-yellow honey coloured when viewed through a strong white light. The majority of pieces retain examples of cortex in the form of a thin, weathered chalky skin and the collection source is likely to be local, selected either from surface stones or pebbles from along the Well Beck valley immediately to the south.

The condition of the assemblage is good, with most pieces in fresh condition, indicating minimal post-depositional damage or abrasion. This normally indicates that they have been recovered close to where they were originally discarded/buried.

No classic decortication flakes were collected and the assemblage is dominated by hard struck pieces, with *ad hoc* utilisation of several shattered pieces – one of which has a deep notch from use against a hard surface. A single well defined tool was collected in the form of a fairly thick flake/accidental blade which retains its cortex. The tool appears to be a form of short side-scraper with fairly neat bilateral retouch with some signs of wear before loss/discard. The retention of cortex and the shortness of the tool are more typical of later prehistoric techniques of manufacture.

Two examples of cores are present, both of which show evidence of rotation with multiple-platforms and little or no platform preparation. The low number of flakes, fairly poor quality of flint, use of hard hammer and multi-platform cores along with the presence of a notched 'chunk' flake indicates a Bronze Age date; while the consistent use of hard hammer and hinge fractures and the crude, irregular core more pointedly indicate a Late Bronze Age tradition.

Five pieces of burnt flint weighing a total of 75g were collected from the subsoil (02). They are all heavily heat affected; one has a granulated and reddened appearance while the others are all heavily calcined. They are of uncertain date, and although may represent prehistoric background activity, may equally have been produced in association with burning or hearth activities of any historic period

Context	Type	Qty	Weight (g)	Context Type
02	Utilised Flake/Blade	1	9	Subsoil
Hard struck primary stepped flake/accidental blade, with majority of cortex retained – exhibits fairly neat bilateral retouch for use as an edge scraper or crude blade. Shows some use-wear although fairly fresh.				
02	Chunk	1	6	Subsoil
Fairly glossy chunk of flint, produced incidentally by a hard strike/shatter has a bi-lateral use-wear and a deeply invasive notch				
02	Flake	1	5	Subsoil
Secondary hard struck flake.				
02	Flake	1	18	Subsoil
Shatter produced through a hard strike, minimal cortex with dorsal scarring from flakes removed at various angles				
02	Chunk	1	7	Subsoil
Part of a hard strike, shows evidence from previous strikes at an opposed angle				
02	Flake	1	5	Subsoil
Secondary flake, fairly hard struck, fresh.				
02	Core	1	47	Subsoil
A worked out 'irregular' core with multi-directional scarring, fresh condition. Many of the scars are step fractures showing repeated hard hammer use against an already exhausted core.				
02	Fragment/Core	1	35	Subsoil
A glossy roughly wedge shaped fragment with multi-directional platforms/strikes, cortex remains on c. 25%.				
02	Flake	1	17	Subsoil
Probably a thermal flake with use-wear and minimal retouch along all sides				
02	Fragment	1	17	Subsoil
Possibly a thermally produced chunk with minor but failed attempts at small flake removal				

- **Metal Objects**

A small number of metal objects were collected from the subsoil (02) during the course of machine reduction. These include three late post-medieval buttons and a single piece of lead. A broken and abraded fragment from a bronze object was also found, which is difficult to identify but may derive from a Romano-British strap fastener, heavy buckle or may even be part of a harness fitting.

Context No.	Feature No.	SSD	Material	Object	Object Date	Feature Period
02	-	Evaluation	Cu-Al	**Button**	L.Post-medieval	-
A complete, 'silver' gilded copper-alloy cast discoidal button with a small suspension loop on the reverse. Has a flat face with no other detail. 2.36g. 17mm diameter.						
02	-	Evaluation	Cu-Al	**Button**	L.Post-medieval	-
A complete, 'silver' gilded copper-alloy cast discoidal button with a soldered suspension loop on the reverse. Has a flat face with no other detail.. 1.8g. 13mm diameter.						
02	-	Evaluation	Cu-Al	**Button**	L.Post-medieval	-
A copper-alloy cast discoidal button with the scar from a lost soldered suspension loop on the reverse. Has a flat face with no other detail.. 0.53g. 12mm diameter.						
02	-	Evaluation	Lead	**Fragment**	Unknown	-
A sub-oval fragment of lead with a white patina. 14g. L 28mm, W 23mm T 5mm (max).						
02	-	Evaluation	Cu-Al	**Object Fragment**	?Roman	-
A fragment from a cast copper-alloy object of uncertain form. The piece is abraded although fairly robust in form. It has a curving side with remnants of two open holes. Its original form is hard to discern but its general form and the presence of some open work may indicate that it derives from a strap fastener, heavy buckle or even be part of a harness fitting 4.87g. L 22mm, W 15mm T 4mm (max).						

- **Metal Working Debris**

Four small fragments of vesicular slag were collected with a combined weight of 36g, all of which have the dark colour of iron rich slags. Two of these are undiagnostic and cannot be distinguished from smelting or smithing residue, while the other two are fairly dense and may be from a furnace bottom.

- **Clay Tobacco Pipe**

A single clay tobacco-pipe stem of later post-medieval date was collected from the sub-soil (02).

8.0 Conclusions

No features were revealed within the confines of the evaluation trench and despite the proximity to a known Early Saxon cemetery just 80m to the south on the southern side of the hill, no graves or Saxon finds were encountered. Natural geology was reached at c. 0.35m below the current ground surface.

A small assemblage of finds was collected from the subsoil, which appears to have been well mixed through 19th century ploughing. The finds include late post-medieval buttons, metal working debris, a possible fragment from a Romano-British fastener or harness fitting, two abraded sherds of Romano-British pottery and an assemblage of Late Bronze Age worked flint – which include an exhausted core and a side-scraper.

The finds are consistent with residual evidence for both prehistoric and Romano-British activity in the general area of the site. A focus of Romano-British activity in the form of a possible high status farm or villa is located c. 185m to the south-east and a Bronze Age cremation burial was discovered in a similar location.

Any recommendations for archaeological mitigation ahead of the proposed development will be made by the Norfolk Historic Environment Service.

9.0 Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Karen Rose who commissioned Norvic Archaeology to carry out this project and Mick Hardesty who carried out the machine work. Thanks are also due to Jack Price for his assistance on site. All stages of the monitoring and post-excavation analysis work were carried out by the author. NHER data was obtained directly from records held at Gressenhall by the Norfolk Historic Environment Service.

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Appendix 1: Context Summary

Context	Category	Fill of	Brief Physical Description	Interpretation	Period
01	Deposit	-	Firm, mid-brownish-grey sandy-loam, occ. cbm/coke/stone, rare glass, c. 0.10m deep	Active topsoil	*Modern*
02	Deposit	-	Firm, mid-yellowish-grey silty-sand, mod. stones, occ. chalk flecks, rare cbm/coke, c. 0.2m deep	Subsoil	*Post-medieval*
03	Deposit	-	V.firm, mid-yellowish-grey sandy-clay, 20% stones c. 0.10m deep	Natural	
04	Deposit	-	V.firm, mid-yellowish-orange sandy-clay, rare stones	Natural	

Appendix 2a: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Quantity	Weight (g)	Comment
02	Burnt flint	4	75	
	Clay tobacco pipe – stem	1	-	
	Copper-alloy - object	1	5	?Romano-British
	Copper-alloy – buttons	3	5	Late Post-medieval
	Flint	10	166	Late Bronze Age
	Lead	1	14	
	Metal working debris – slag	4	36	
	Pottery	2	14	Romano-British

Appendix 2b: NHER finds summary table

Period	Material	Quantity
Unknown	Burnt flint	4
Late Bronze Age (1000 to 701BC)	Worked flint	10
Roman (42 to 409AD)	Copper-alloy – object	1
	Pottery	2
Post-medieval (1540 to 1900AD)	Copper-alloy – buttons	3

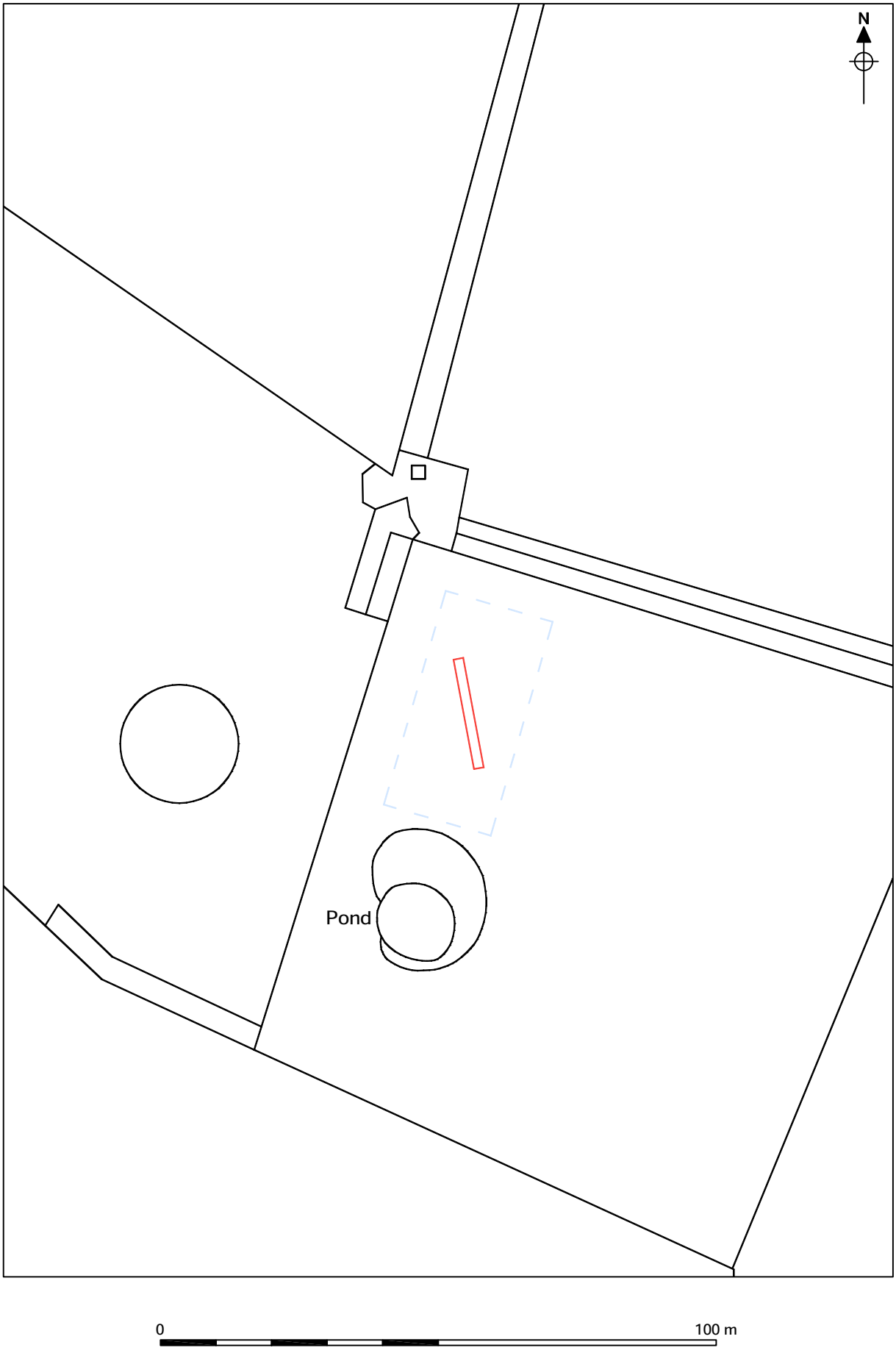

Figure 3. Site plan to show Manege area and Evaluation Trench. Scale 1:1000

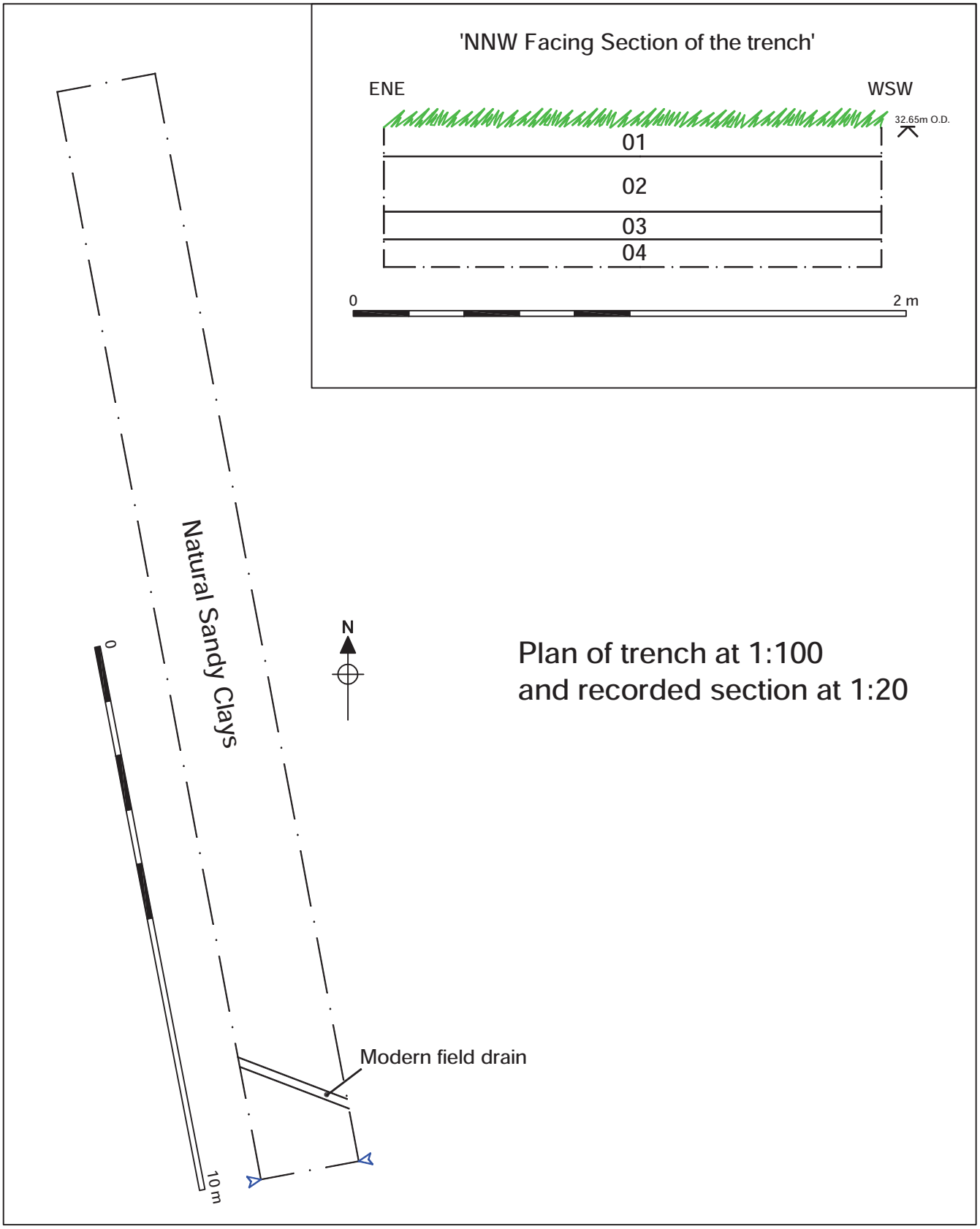

Figure 4. Trench plan and recorded baulk section