

EXCAVATIONS AND SURVEYS IN NORFOLK 1990

Edited by David Gurney

This annual report comprises summaries of archaeological excavations, fieldwork and surveys carried out during the year. As it is often several years before post-excavation work is completed and a full excavation report is published, these summaries provide a useful guide to current archaeological research.

Sites are listed alphabetically by parish, and their locations are shown on Fig. 1. The directors of excavations, organisations involved, the intended place for the deposition of finds and intended place of publication are listed, where known. The following abbreviations are used:—NAU — Norfolk Archaeological Unit; Site — Norfolk Sites and Monuments Record Site Number; NCM — Norwich Castle Museum; KLM — King's Lynn Museum; EAA — *East Anglian Archaeology*; NA — *Norfolk Archaeology*.

All contributors are thanked for providing information, fuller details of which may be obtained, if required, from the Norfolk Archaeological Unit.

1. *Bixley* (Sites 6099 and 9585; TG 241 055) (Fig. 2)

by Trevor Ashwin, NAU.

Three ring-ditches lying in exposed positions overlooking the Arminghall henge were excavated between November 1989 and February 1990 in advance of destruction by the Norwich Southern Bypass.

The features were all demonstrated to be round barrows, each occupying a slight natural eminence. All were severely plough-damaged, but great variety in size and structure was evident. One barrow displayed three concentric ring-ditches, with a central group of features producing two un-urned cremations. Another featured a central cremation deposit in a large urn, while in the third barrow, a series of un-urned cremations were seen to cut the truncated remains of a mound. A large pit situated centrally contained no burial.

Finds: NCM. Report: EAA.

2. *Caistor St. Edmund*, Harford Farm (Site 9794; TG 224 043) (Fig. 2)

by Trevor Ashwin, NAU.

Nearly four acres of a prominent cropmark site was sample-excavated between March and August 1990, in advance of destruction by the Norwich Southern Bypass. Four main episodes of activity on the site were discerned.

Six ring-ditches appeared to represent a group of heavily-eroded Neolithic/Early Bronze Age round barrows, and two of these were interpreted as possible disc or hengiform barrows. Inhumation and cremation rites were both practised.

Dispersed traces of ?Early Iron Age settlement were identified, including circular post-built structures and groups of pits. A series of four small square-ditched enclosures were apparently of later Iron Age or Roman date. Their function remains unclear, but there was evidence for internal banks in the examples excavated, while one enclosure was surrounded by a segmental gully containing traces of a palisade.

Two Anglo-Saxon cemeteries were unanticipated discoveries on the site; a nucleated group of thirty-one graves was examined in the northernmost excavated area, while a more dispersed group of fifteen was found c. 150m to the south. The graves were probably of 7th- or early 8th-century date, and while a superficially Christian rite was utilised, a small number of

graves produced remarkable jewellery. Nothing is known of 7th- and 8th-century settlement in the vicinity, but the concentration of contemporary coin finds from the area around nearby *Venta Icenorum* c.700m to the south-east may give evidence of activity with which these groups of burials might be associated.

Finds: NCM. Report: EAA.

3. *Fring* (Site 25758)

by David Gurney, NAU.

Excavation of the site of a coin hoard located by metal-detecting led to the recovery of 153 silver Icenian coins (types represented are Boar/horse, Face/horse and Pattern/horse inscribed ANTD, ECEN, ECE and SAENV) deposited around AD 60, and recently disturbed by subsoiling. The remains of a pottery vessel and textile fragments were also found.

Finds: KLM. Report: NA (this volume).

4. *Hockham*, Briardene, Great Hockham (Site 25488; TL 954 926)

by Edwin Rose, NAU.

Above the fireplace of this timber-framed lobby-entrance house of around 1580, a wall-painting depicting spoked wheels, leafless trees and large birds leaving trails of footprints was discovered. The spoked wheel is an attested apotropaic symbol often found on chimneys, but the significance of the birds is still being investigated. The painting is stylistically contemporary with the house.

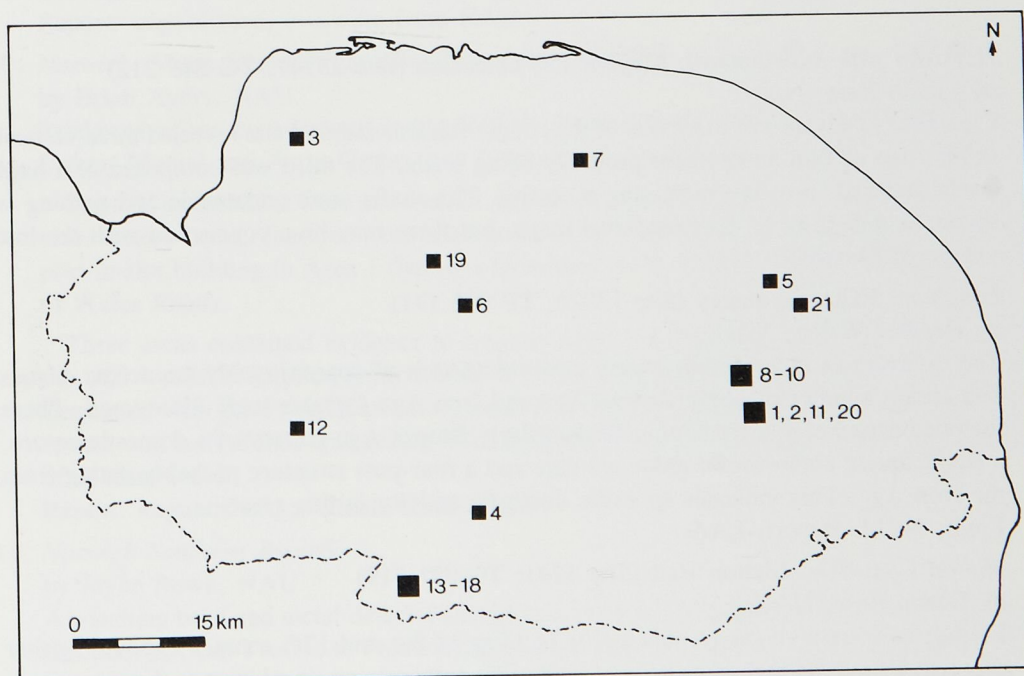


Fig. 1

Locations of excavations and surveys in Norfolk in 1990

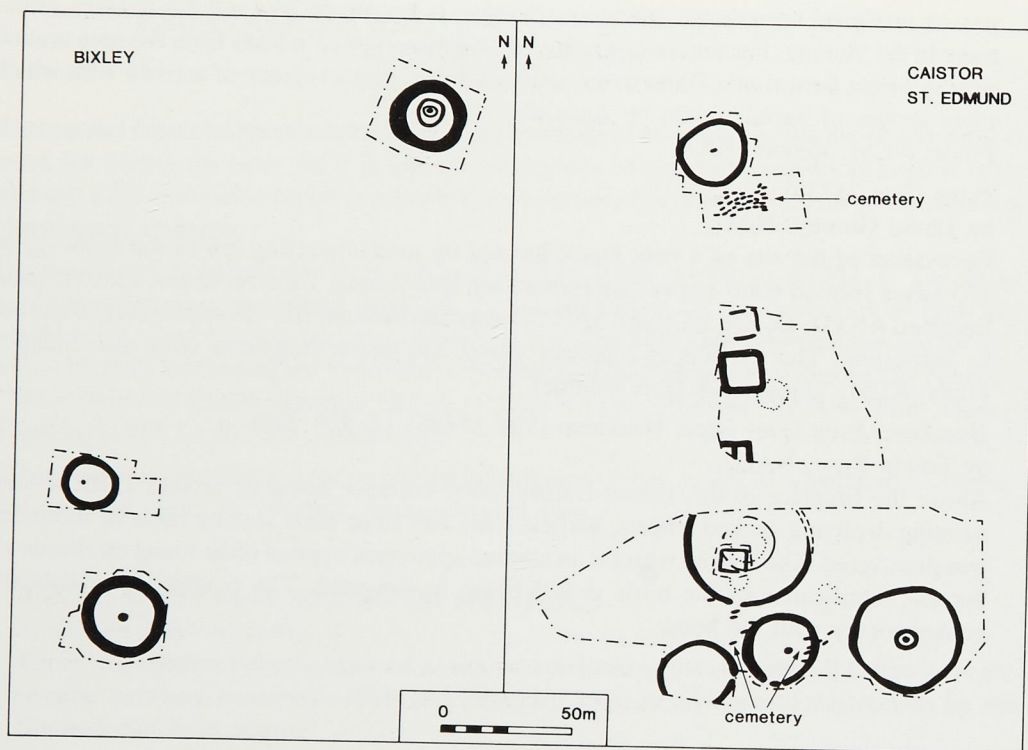


Fig. 2

Bixley and Caistor St. Edmund excavations; the principal features. Scale 1:3000

5. *Horstead with Stanninghall, Mayton Pits extension* (Site 25747; TG 245 212) by Edwin Rose, NAU.

Clearance in advance of extension of the county rubbish disposal site revealed three vertical shafts, two of flint and cement probably being wells. The third was composed of a hard green material, possibly indicating a cesspit. The shafts were undateable and nothing is shown at this point on post-medieval maps, but there may be a connection with the lost village of Mayton.

6. *Longham, Ennemix quarry* (Site 13025; TF 928 171) by Heather Wallis, NAU.

The excavations at Longham quarry covered an area of approximately ten acres. Across this area a number of Early Bronze Age and Iron Age features were discovered. These included series of pits containing Beaker/Early Bronze Age pottery of a domestic nature, a small square enclosure of unknown date and a four-post structure probably dating from the Iron Age. This indicates sporadic domestic activity in this area.

Finds: NCM. Report: EAA.

7. *Melton Constable, Melton Hall* (Site 3241; TG 031 319) by Edwin Rose, NAU.

Further conversion work on this major building of the mid-17th century exposed further decorative windows in the former west wall of the service wing, in addition to those previously reported. Dismantling of the colonnade on the west facade of the main hall prior to reconstruction produced fragments of 15th-century tracery and carvings in mid 17th-century

style, but not similar to any visible work in the Hall itself. The colonnade is said to date from 1757. The medieval tracery may have come from one of the churches in the vicinity, but the origin of the other carved stone is a mystery.

8. *Norwich*, Old Cattle Market car park ('Castle Mall') (Site 777; TG 232 084)
by Jez Reeve, NAU.

Work continues under the Cattle Market car parks and adjacent roads prior to shopping mall development. In 1990, archaeological evidence suggested Late Saxon occupation across the six-acre site. Remains of domestic and industrial activity were identified from many of the almost ubiquitous pits as well as from surviving post-holes. Notable finds were two Late Saxon sunken-featured buildings, and two possible kilns.

Sections of the castle's earthwork defences were fully excavated, the bailey ditch to a depth of 3m and the barbican to a depth of 10m. A substantial fragment of the barbican gateway, complete with hinge settings, was located within this ditch. Further work is scheduled in this area to understand the castle entrance complex.

Report: EAA.

9. *Norwich*, Maid's Head, Quayside (Site 26319; TG 23275 09002)
by Jayne Bown, NAU.

Two trial pits were excavated on behalf of Nellist Blundell Flint Partnership by mechanical excavator to test the depth and preservation of archaeological deposits. That at the Quayside frontage produced 4.3m of deposits dating from at least as early as the 11th century. Waterlogged deposits were encountered from 2.7m below the ground surface, and an upright oak post or pile 1.9m high and pointed at the base was recovered. The other test pit, 30m behind the street frontage, contained deposits 2.6m deep, including a band of charred cereal and one sherd of Thetford-type ware.

Report: unpublished; available from NAU.

10. *Norwich*, Mann Egerton Site (Site 845; TG 2345 0859)
by Brian Ayers, NAU.

Trial excavations were directed for the NAU by Heather Wallis on behalf of National Farmers Union, Mutual and Avon Group, and Capital and Counties plc.

Ten trial excavations were undertaken, as well as a basement survey of the standing structure. Saxo-Norman features were recorded in five of these areas, including a corner of a post-in-slot building in Area 1 (below a basement at the corner of King Street and Prince of Wales Road).

Three areas contained evidence to suggest large and important buildings either within the trial works or implied from rubble material. These structures were almost certainly associated with the Franciscan Friary known to have stood on the site. A wall located in Area 2 was built of flint with facing flints knapped to form an even face. It stood to a height of at least 1.1m.

Report: unpublished; available from NAU.

11. *Norwich Southern Bypass*
by Jayne Bown, NAU.

A watching brief and metal-detector survey is in progress along the route of the new bypass. Contract 4, from Trowse to Postwick, produced finds predominantly of worked flint, and a small hearth packed with burnt flint. The remaining three sections of the bypass will be walked and detected during 1991.

Finds: NCM.

12. *Oxborough* (Site 25458; TF 768 033)
by Kenneth Penn, NAU.
Excavation of a low mound where many Early Saxon objects had been found by metal-detector survey revealed that the mound was natural, but encircled by a ring-ditch which was probably the remains of a prehistoric barrow.
The site was later reused as an Early Saxon cemetery, now mostly ploughed away. Ten damaged burials survived, with a few grave goods. Grave 9 was a woman whose skull had been trephined. The finds are mostly 6th century.
13. *Thetford*, St. Nicholas' Street (Site 1134; TL 869 832)
by Phil Andrews, NAU.
Three areas totalling c.1000 sq.m were excavated prior to office development on this car park site in the centre of the town, north of the Little Ouse River. Excavation funded by Breckland District Council took place between March and October 1990.
The earliest evidence for occupation comprised a variety of shallow ditches, pits and scoops, all broadly dateable to the 3rd-4th centuries AD. In addition to these were the post-holes of two possible structures, two corn-driers and a single female inhumation accompanied by an iron buckle and a bone pin. This is the first evidence for Roman occupation within the town north of the river, and it probably represents part of a farmstead or small settlement.
Middle Saxon finds included a small quantity of Ipswich Ware, a 9th-century continental *denarius* and a disc brooch, but no contemporary features were found.
Approximately twenty Late Saxon pits and several shallow gullies, possibly property divisions, were dug in the 11th century or earlier. Finds included Thetford Ware and two late 10th-century pennies. No certain evidence for structures was found, and the excavated area may have lain in backyards. However, the pits confirm the presence of reasonably intensive and dense occupation north of the river prior to the Norman conquest. A single inhumation and a quantity of human bone redeposited in later features may perhaps indicate the location of a hitherto unknown Late Saxon church.
At least fifty pits dated to the 12th-15th century, with a large percentage falling in the middle of this range. Most appear to have been used for cess or rubbish disposal, or as wells. The fragmentary stone footings of at least one building fronting St. Nicholas' Street were found. The features and finds indicate development of this area following the establishment of the street early in the 12th century, with a decline commencing in the late 14th century.
Various post-medieval structures and pits suggest later recovery of the area, which continued into the 19th century when the area became densely built-up with artisan housing. Finds: NCM. Report: EAA.
14. *Thetford*, Minstergate (Site 5913; TL 868 832)
by Phil Andrews, NAU.
Salvage work during building construction on this site previously reported on (NA XLI, pt I (1990), 111) enabled the recording of over forty inhumations. These overlay earlier pits and are likely to have been part of a cemetery to the north of the now-demolished St. Nicholas' church, a medieval foundation. No trace of the church was found. Report: EAA.
15. *Thetford*, Brandon Road (Site 24849; TL 8563 8320)
by Andrew Rogerson, NAU.

In July 1990, thirteen assessment trenches measuring 10m by 3m were excavated under the direction of Tim Longman (NAU) for the Crown Estates, on an area of the former golf course covering 7000 sq.m. This area lies roughly in the centre of a zone of Middle Saxon activity which stretches for c.800m along the south bank of the River Little Ouse north-west of the Late Saxon town.

Nine trenches revealed archaeological features cut into the natural sand, including pits, post-holes and ditches and, while some were left unexcavated, those which were examined were of Early and Middle Saxon date. A 6th-century sunken-featured building contained unfired clay loom-weights, a copper alloy girdle-hanger and an almost complete lugged pottery bowl.

A sparse scatter of Neolithic/Early Bronze Age worked flints and a few Iron Age potsherds and copper alloy ring-necked pin may not be indicative of prehistoric occupation on the site itself. In two trenches at the north end of the site, layers below the topsoil containing abundant Roman pottery were not further examined. Late 1st- to 4th-century material was concentrated to the north and Early Saxon to the south, while Middle Saxon finds were recovered over the whole area. There was no evidence of activity later than the 9th century, and no Thetford Ware was found. It is expected that the complete area will be excavated in 1991 in advance of development.

16. *Thetford*, Priory car park (Site 5748; TL 866 832)
by Kenneth Penn, NAU.
A small assessment excavation between the Priory fence and the river revealed that this area, just above the floor of the river valley, was made-up ground above river deposits, and was probably of very recent origin.
17. *Thetford*, St. George's Nunnery (Site 5892; TL 873 823)
by Phil Andrews, NAU.
A watching brief during drainage and foundation work at this site previously reported on (NA XLI, pt I (1990), 112) enabled various details of the layout of the church and conventual buildings to be clarified. Burials to the east of the church and within the nave were recorded.
Report: NA.
18. *Thetford*, Old Market Street (Site 5747; TL 873 828)
by Phil Andrews, NAU.
A watching brief during foundation work at this site within the Iron Age fort revealed no contemporary features or finds. However, three pits of 13th to 14th century date were recorded, one of which contained fragments of two large crucibles.
Finds: NCM. Report: EAA.
19. *Tittleshall*, Godwick church (Site 1104; TF 902 220)
by Edwin Rose, NAU.
The ruins of this medieval church consist of a tower with medieval base, the upper parts reconstructed in the 17th century perhaps as a garden ornament. Parts of the structure have collapsed in recent years and another large section fell in March 1990, after which several sections of worked limestone in Norman style were recovered. This indicates that the original church was a substantial Norman building.
20. *Trowse-with-Newton*, Valley Belt (Site 9589; TG 245 062)
by Trevor Ashwin, NAU.
A large area was sample-excavated in October-December 1990 on an elevated site c.1000m

east of the Arminghall henge, in advance of gravel extraction for the Norwich Southern Bypass.

Despite severe erosion, the area examined produced numerous post-holes representing the remains of Bronze Age and early Iron Age settlement. A series of substantial enclosure ditches of Iron Age date was also examined. Other features included two small square-ditched enclosures, apparently identical to those from Caistor St. Edmund (see No. 2 above). A small Roman iron-smelting furnace was found to be well preserved.

The site as a whole has produced a most interesting collection of domestic Beaker and early Iron Age pottery.

Two ring-ditches prominent on pre-excavation aerial photographs of the site were found to be modern.

Finds: NCM. Report: EAA.

21. *Wroxham*, St. Mary's Church (Site 8074; TG 2963 1753)
by Edwin Rose, NAU.

Wroxham church is basically a Norman building but it has nave arcades which have puzzled historians, and which have been assigned to various dates between the 16th and 19th centuries.

Excavations for new partitions revealed the footings of the pre-arcade nave walls and a stone block with herringbone tooling. The west responds of the arcades stand on a layer of flint rubble containing mixed medieval and post-medieval tiles, while the bases of the responds were found to contain late post-medieval bricks. The indications are therefore that the arcades are of 19th-century date, perhaps coincident with the restoration of 1825.

Finds: NCM.