

Report 2770



nps archaeology

## Archaeological Evaluation of land between Choseley Road and Main Road, Brancaster, Norfolk

ENF 126773



**Prepared for**  
Blubird Land and Planning Ltd.  
On behalf of  
Fleur Developments Ltd  
61 Cromer Road  
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## Contents

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<i>Summary</i> .....	1
1.0 Introduction .....	1
2.0 Geology and Topography .....	1
3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background.....	3
4.0 Methodology .....	4
5.0 Results.....	6
5.1 Trench 1 .....	6
5.2 Trench 2 .....	7
5.3 Trench 3 .....	9
5.4 Trench 4 .....	12
6.0 The Finds .....	15
6.1 Pottery .....	15
6.2 Ceramic building material (CBM).....	15
6.3 Animal Bone .....	15
6.4 Finds Discussion .....	15
7.0 Conclusions .....	15
<i>Acknowledgements</i> .....	17
<i>Bibliography</i> .....	17
Appendix 1a: Context Summary .....	18
Appendix 1b: OASIS Feature Summary .....	18
Appendix 2a: Finds by Context .....	18
Appendix 2b: OASIS Finds Summary .....	18

## **Figures**

- Figure 1 Site location
- Figure 2 Trench location
- Figure 3 Trench 3, plan and sections
- Figure 4 Trench 4, plan

## **Plates**

- Plate 1 Trench 1
- Plate 2 Trench 2a
- Plate 3 The pig burial in Trench 2a
- Plate 4 Trench 2b
- Plate 5 Trench 3
- Plate 6 Pit [1] in Trench 3
- Plate 7 Ditch [4] in Trench 3
- Plate 8 The northern end of Trench 4 (looking north-east)
- Plate 9 The southern end of Trench 4 (looking south)
- Plate 10 Gully [6] in Trench 4

Location:	Between Choseley Road and Main Road, Brancaster, Norfolk
District:	King's Lynn and West Norfolk
Grid Ref.:	TF 7712 4378
HER No.:	ENF 126773
OASIS Ref.:	106043
Client:	Fleur Developments Ltd
Dates of Fieldwork:	23-24 June 2011

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## **Summary**

*An archaeological evaluation was conducted for Fleur Developments Ltd in June 2011 ahead of work to construct new housing on a site between Choseley Road and Main Road (the A149) at Brancaster in north-west Norfolk.*

*The work revealed a single ditch of medieval to post-medieval date and the modern burial of a pig.*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Following a proposal to construct a number of new dwellings on a 0.7 hectare site previously occupied by a farm machinery factory in Brancaster, Norfolk (Fig. 1) an archaeological evaluation consisting of four trial trenches was undertaken.

This work was undertaken to fulfil a planning condition set by Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council (Ref. 10/01263/F) and a Brief issued by Norfolk Historic Environment Service (Ref. CNF43148). The work was conducted in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NPS Archaeology (Ref. NAU/BAU2770/NP). This work was commissioned by Blubird Land and Planning Ltd and funded by Fleur Developments Ltd. of Holt.

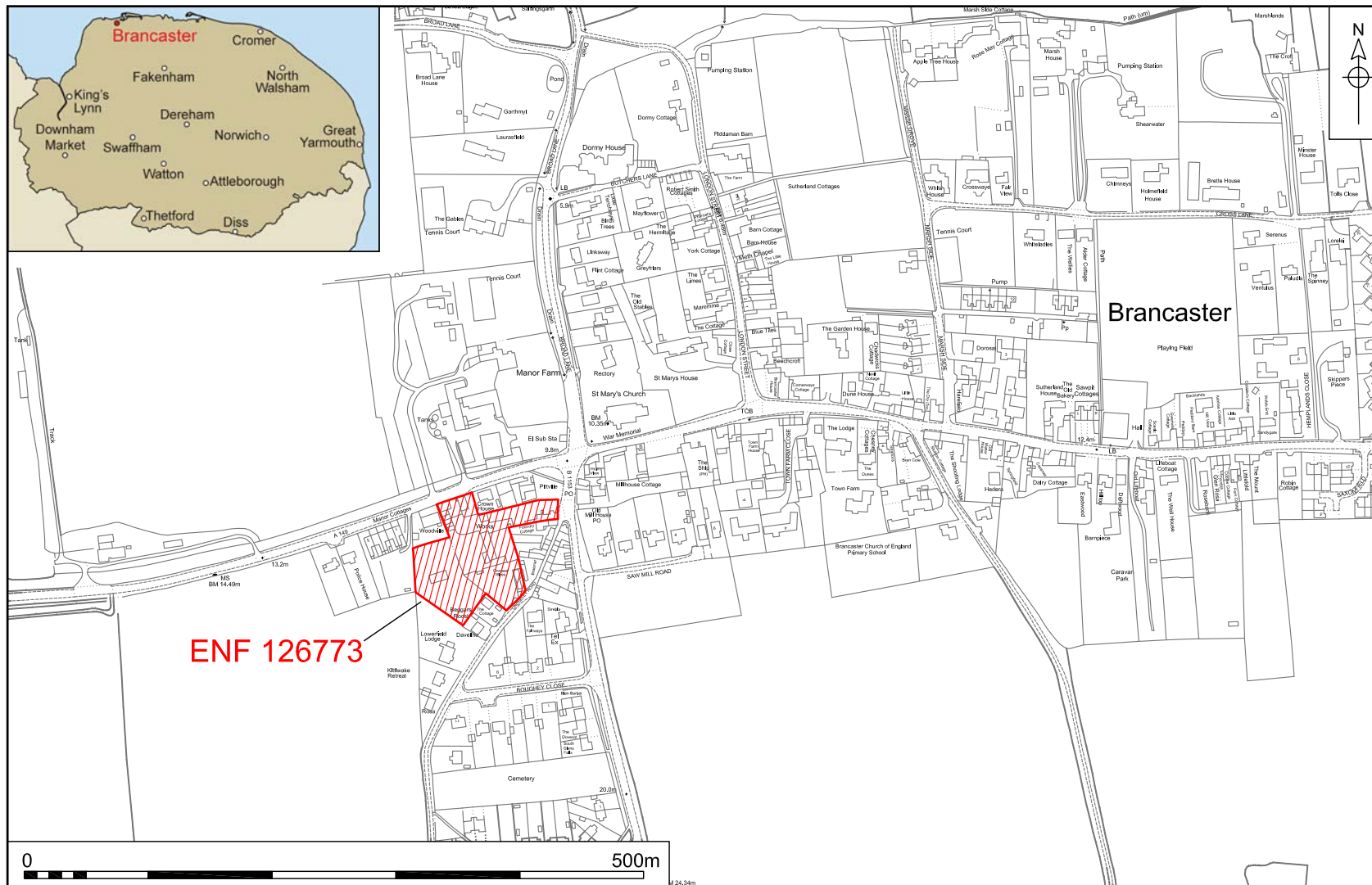
This programme of work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, following the guidelines set out in *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* (Department for Communities and Local Government 2010). The results will enable decisions to be made by the Local Planning Authority about the treatment of any archaeological remains found.

The site archive is currently held by NPS Archaeology and on completion of the project will be deposited with the Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service (NMAS), following the relevant policies on archiving standards.

## **2.0 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

Brancaster lies on a narrow and gently sloping coastal platform of typical argillic brown earths, between alluvial gley soils in the coastal marshes to the north and coarse, fine, loamy brown rendzinas to the south (Soil Survey of England and Wales). The solid geology in this area is Upper Chalk.

The evaluated site lies at an elevation of approximately 10m OD. At the time of the fieldwork there had been little rain for several weeks and the ground was very dry.



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Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:5000

The topsoil in Trenches 1-3 was a mid to dark brown, fine, crumbly silt approx. 0.4m deep. In Trench 4 this deposit was only 0.15m deep and was overlain by a 0.2m deep layer of crushed tarmac or grit and topsoil. The subsoil tended to be a mix of the topsoil and a mottled, light orangey-brown compacted silty sand (natural) or sandy silt with frequent flecks of chalk and fairly frequent flint. It was 0.1m to 0.15m deep. Beneath it was a natural deposit of cleaner, slightly brighter orangey-brown silty sand with little or no root disturbance.

### **3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The development site is situated close to the historic core of medieval Brancaster and a short distance to the west of Brancaster Roman fort. St. Mary's Church lies just to the north-east of the site and the potential for archaeological remains to be present associated with the medieval development of the village is quite high.

Information on past archaeological discoveries near the site comes primarily from the Norfolk Historical Environment Record (NHER).

#### **Prehistoric**

There are scattered prehistoric finds from around Brancaster, and fragments of Beaker pottery were found within 100m of the site in the 1970s (NHER 1362) indicating a possibility that further prehistoric remains may be discovered here.

#### **Roman**

To the east of the village lies the site of the Roman stone-walled fort of Branodunum (NHER 1001), one of several 'Saxon Shore' forts. Branodunum appears to have been built in the first half of the 3rd century AD, making it one of the earliest in this chain of fortifications. There were large areas of extra-mural settlement around the fort (NHER 1002-4), and the remains of an earlier fort have been identified to the north (NHER 1004). Excavation of the area to the west of Branodunum (NHER 1002, Hinchliffe and Sparey Green 1985) suggests that occupation may have begun in the late 2nd century, prior to construction of the main fort – which may explain the slight difference in alignment between the fort and the surrounding settlement remains. A Roman mosaic is reported to have been found to the north-west of Branodunum in 1960s (NHER 31152) and a scatter of Roman coins have also been found to the west of the complex (NHERs 1365, 1374, 1381, 24224, 29177).

#### **Medieval**

The earliest parts of St Mary's Church (NHER 1390) (which is located approximately 100m from the development site) date from the 12th century – although it is thought that there may have been an earlier church of Saxon date; a fragment of Saxon pottery was found on a site to the north of the church in the 1970s (NHER 15317). There are also cropmarks of possible Saxon features to the west at Titchwell (NHER 26745).

#### **Post-medieval**

The earliest detailed maps of Brancaster suggest that during the late 18th and early 19th century most dwellings were located along the main road through the village and London Street to the east of the church. There was also a row of properties strung out along the margins of Brancaster saltmarsh, to the north of

Cross Lane. Faden's and Bryant's maps of the county (1797 and 1826, respectively) (Barringer 1989 and 1998) are at too small a scale to show any detail of the development site itself, although there are several buildings marked on the latter. The Tithe Map of Brancaster shows that the site had begun to be developed, with three to four buildings and several property divisions.

### **Modern**

In more recent history, the development site housed a factory for the production of agricultural implements. During World War II an air raid shelter was constructed in the grounds and this is still visible above ground, in a patch of trees opposite the main entrance.

## **4.0 METHODOLOGY**

The objective of this evaluation was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence or absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

The Brief required a 5% sample of the development area to be sampled by trial trenching. Four trenches were excavated (Fig. 2). Trench 1 was located in an area previously used as a campsite and caravan park, to the rear of cottages along Choseley Road and Trenches 2 and 3 were located in the garden of a modern bungalow to the west of the factory. In recent history, the development site housed a factory for the production of agricultural implements and Trench 4 was situated within the former factory yard.

Due to constraints encountered on site, the positions of Trenches 2 and 3 were amended and Trench 2 was slit into two separate trenches (2a and 2b).

Machine excavation was carried out with a wheeled JCB-type excavator using a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision.

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

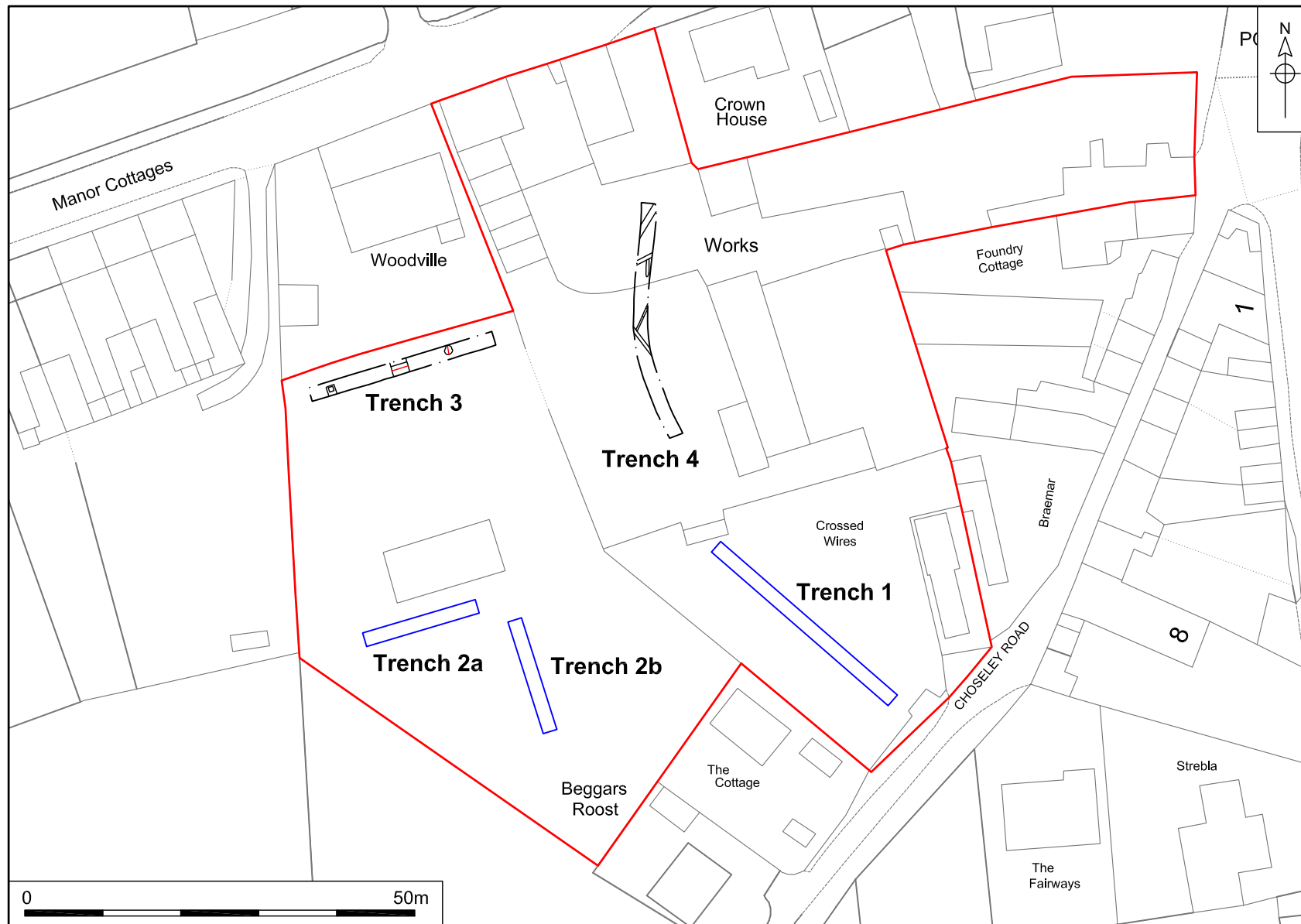
No environmental samples were taken.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using NPS Archaeology pro forma. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales. Colour, monochrome and digital photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

The temporary benchmark used during the course of this work was transferred from an Ordnance Survey benchmark with a value of 9.8m on the junction of Mill Road and the A149.

Site conditions were good, with the work taking place in very hot and dry weather.





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Figure 2. Trench location. Scale 1:750

## 5.0 RESULTS

### 5.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 (Fig. 2, Plate 1) was opened adjacent to Choseley Road in an area formerly occupied by a campsite. The trench measured 30m long by 1.8m wide and ran roughly north-west to south-east from the gate into the former factory site to the Choseley Road entrance to the land.



Plate 1. Trench 1

The topsoil consisted of 0.09m of fine garden topsoil and grass roots (turf) over 0.3m of mid-brown, fine crumbly silt with occasional ceramic building material (CBM) and frequent smallish lumps of flint and chalk (plus some scattering of coal fragments). Beneath the topsoil was a layer of subsoil 0.1m-0.12m deep. This subsoil was a mottled, light orangey-brown in colour and consisted of compacted silty sand with frequent smallish lumps of chalk and moderate amounts of flint. At a depth of approx. 0.4m below the current ground surface, the soil became cleaner and a slightly brighter shade of orangey-brown, with little to no root disturbance.

Stripping off the turves revealed two narrow orange lines which appeared to be a natural deposit between three wider furrows, but further investigation showed that this 'natural' was redeposited within the backfill of modern service trenches for water and electricity and that the brown deposit was topsoil. The trench was machined to the surface of deposit [8] a cleaner orangey-brown natural sand and no features were revealed apart from the modern services.

## 5.2 Trench 2

Due to the layout of the garden to the rear of the bungalow ('Beggars Roost') and the need to maintain access to the front of the property, Trench 2 was divided into two separate trenches (2a and 2b) each measuring 15m long and set at right angles to one another close to the rear of the building (Fig. 2).



Plate 2. Trench 2a

### Trench 2a

Trench 2a (Plate 2) was orientated east-west and was parallel to the back wall of the bungalow (Fig. 2).

A single feature was identified which contained the articulated remains of a pig (or part of a pig) (Plate 3). The backfill in this feature was identical to the topsoil and contained fragments of modern or post-medieval ceramic building material within it. The burial was interpreted as modern and no further investigation took place and the feature backfilled.

### Trench 2b

Trench 2b (Plate 4) was perpendicular to Trench 2a and ran southwards from its eastern end (Fig. 2).

No archaeological features or deposits were present.





Plate 3. The pig burial in Trench 2a



Plate 4. Trench 2b



### 5.3 Trench 3

Trench 3 was 25m long and was located within the front garden of 'Beggars Roost' and in order to maintain access to the property the trench was located close to and aligned with the boundary hedge at the front of the garden (Figs 2 and 3, Plate 5).



Plate 5. Trench 3

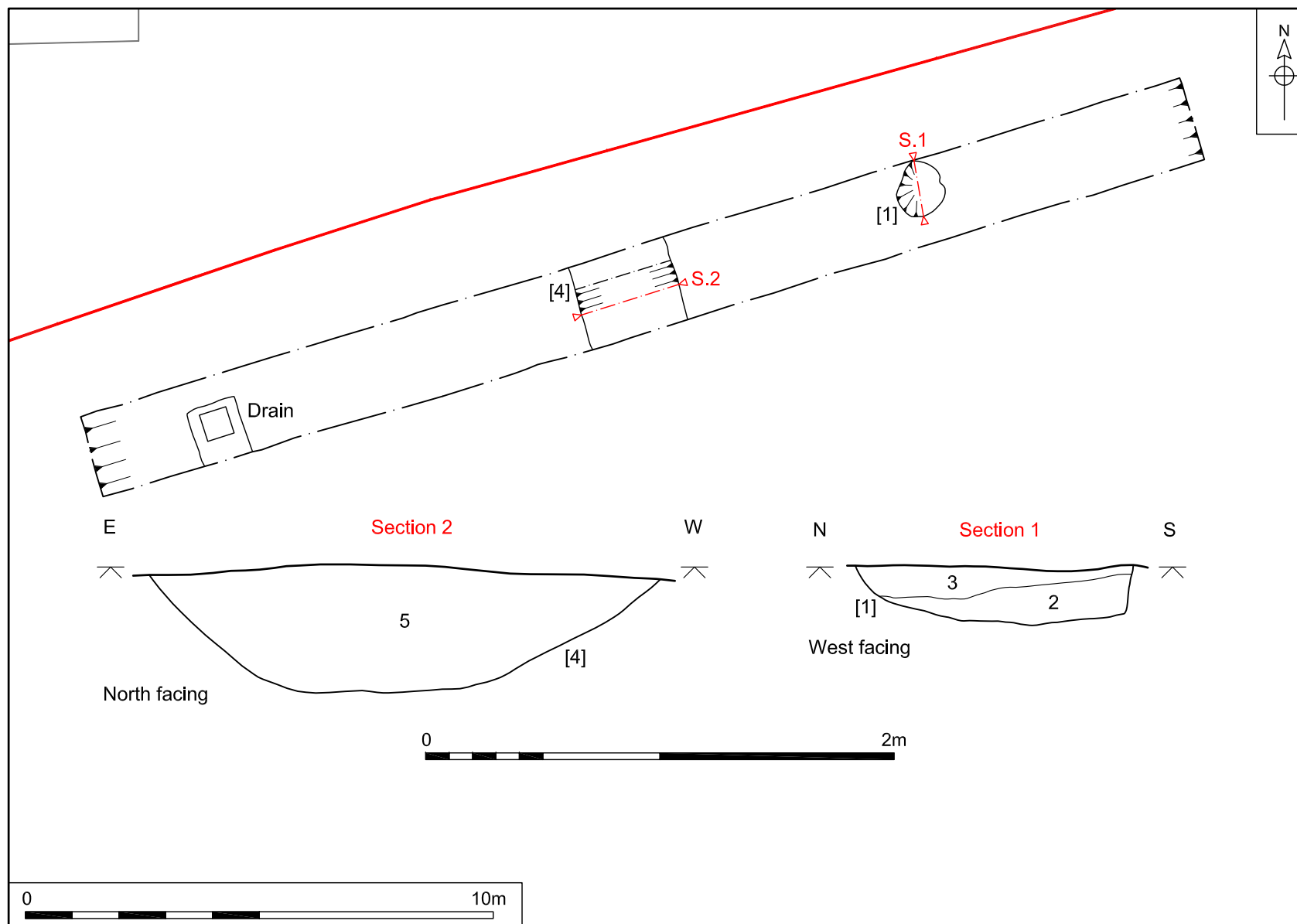
Two features ([1] and [4]) were identified within Trench 3.

Feature [1] was an oval pit which measured 1.2m long by 1m wide and was 0.25m deep (Fig. 4, Plate 6). It contained two fills; a mid-grey-brown sand 0.14m deep [3] and beneath this a dark grey sand [2] 0.22m deep (Fig. 4 Section 1) which appeared to contain burnt material and fragments of modern flower pot.

Feature [4] (Fig. 4, Plate 7), was a 2m wide flat-bottomed ditch which was 0.48m deep. It ran in a north-south direction across the trench and was filled with a slightly silty sand (5) (Fig. 4 Section 2). The fill contained a single fragment of medieval brick and in the middle of the base of the ditch were a number of large flint nodules possibly deliberately placed to aid drainage.

This ditch was possibly an old boundary ditch.

A modern septic tank (Plate 5 foreground with 1m ranging rod on top) was encountered at the east end of the trench



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Figure 3. Trench 3, plan and sections. Scale 1:125 and 1:25





Plate 6. Pit [1] in Trench 3



Plate 7. Ditch [4] in Trench 3



## 5.4 Trench 4

The need to avoid two large dumps of modern building debris resulted in changes to the orientation and location of Trench 4. At its north end the trench was situated to the east of the main entrance to the site (from the A149) and was aligned north-east to south-west for approximately 10m (Plate 8); at this point it changed direction and ran roughly north-south for a further 20m (Plate 9). Its southern limit was 12.5m north of a gate that leads from the factory grounds into the former campsite field (Figs 2 and 4).



Plate 8. The northern end of Trench 4 (looking north-east)

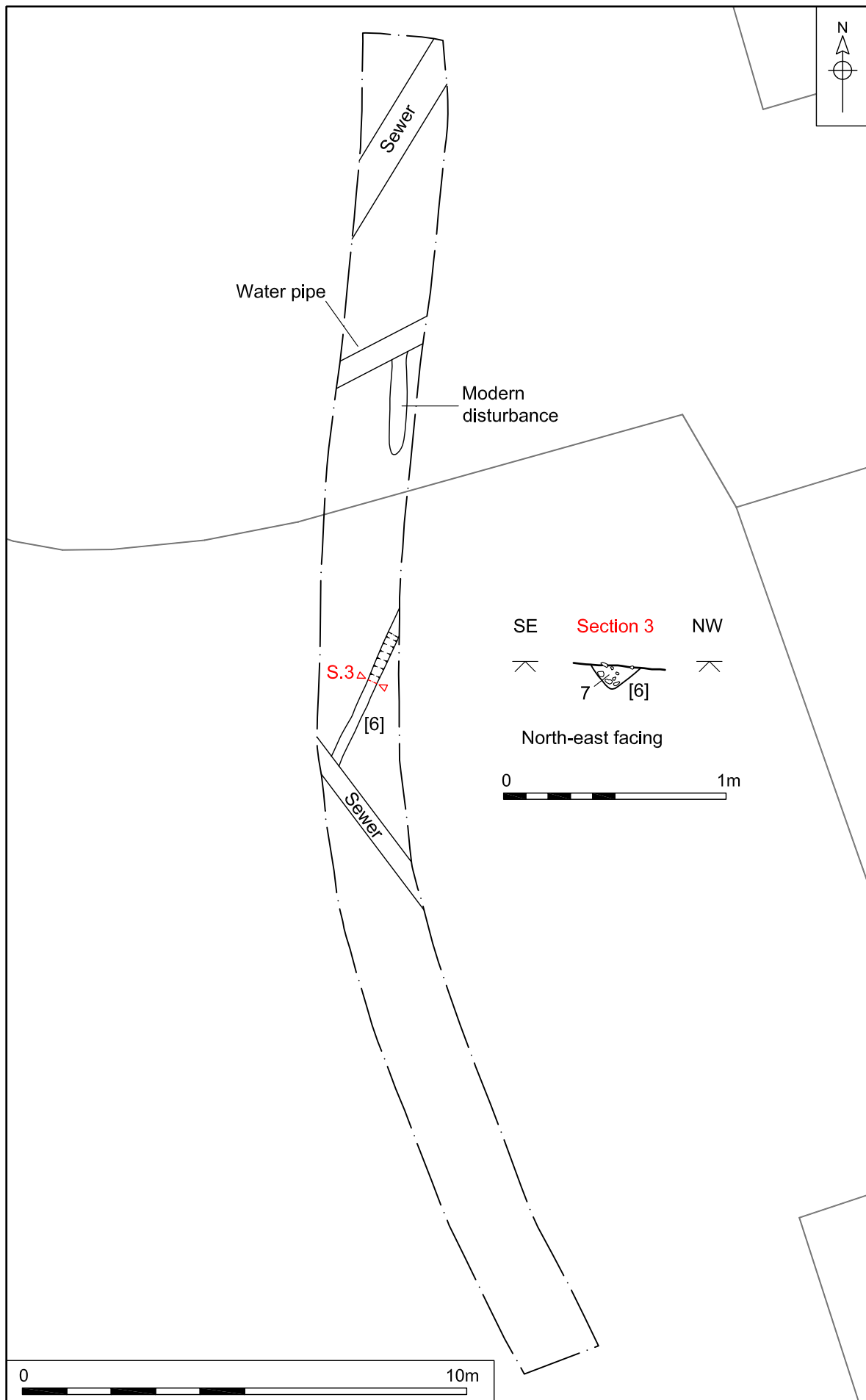
Within Trench 4 was one potential archaeological feature along with two modern drains and a water pipe (Fig. 4).

Feature [6] was a shallow gully that measured 0.11m deep by 0.22m wide. It had a v-shaped profile (Fig. 4 Section 3, Plate 10) and contained fill [7]. No finds were recovered from this feature and it is undated.

During World War II an air raid shelter was constructed in the factory grounds.

The shelter is constructed of yellow brick, with a roof-cap of concrete and can be seen in a patch of trees opposite the main entrance (to the immediate north of a small toilet block on the former campsite site).





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Figure 4. Trench 4, plan and section. Scale 1:125 and 1:25



Plate 9. The southern end of Trench 4 (looking south)



Plate 10 Plate 10

Gully [6] in Trench 4

## **6.0 THE FINDS**

by Lucy Talbot

### **6.1 Pottery**

A total of eleven sherds of modern flowerpot, weighing a total of 162g were recovered from pit fill [2]. Many of the pieces appear to come from two (incomplete) vessels.

### **6.2 Ceramic building material (CBM)**

Two pieces of CBM weighing 84g were collected from two contexts. The assemblage consists of a fragment of brick from ditch fill [5] and a single fragment of modern pan tile, recovered from pit fill [2].

The brick is made from pink-coloured, vegetable-tempered, fine estuarine clay, with coarse inclusions of grog and iron pellets and is probably of medieval date. The pan tile is of a modern medium-sandy, orange fabric.

### **6.3 Animal Bone**

Pit fill [2] produced nine pieces of mammal bone weighing 25g in total. As this small collection was recovered in association with modern pottery and ceramic building material, it is likely that the animal remains are also of modern date and the product of butchering or food waste.

### **6.4 Finds Discussion**

All of the finds recovered were collected from Trench 3 on the north-west side of the site. The only piece of medieval material was collected from ditch [4]. The rest of the finds (pottery, ceramic building material and animal remains) were almost certainly of modern date.

## **7.0 CONCLUSIONS**

The results from the evaluation trenching appear to be quite limited. A small pit and a single ditch running north-south were identified in Trench 3 along with a small gulley in Trench 4; both trenches located in the northern half of the development site.

The ditch in Trench 3 contained a fragment of medieval brick and is most likely a property or field boundary of medieval or possibly post-medieval date however it did not appear in Trench 2a some 30m to the south or in Trench 2b.

The pit in Trench 3 and the gulley in Trench 4 both appear to be of modern date. The pig burial encountered in Trench 2a also appears to be a modern feature and was backfilled with topsoil containing modern brick and tile and rubble.

The agricultural machinery factory which operated here (and which the existing buildings represent) may be of some interest from a modern industrial perspective and there is a Second World War air-raid shelter on the site which was reportedly built by the factory owner in the early 1940s.

The development site appears to have been situated outside the limits of the village during the Roman, Saxon, medieval and post-medieval periods and even now it is on its western limits.

Recommendations for future work based upon this report will be made by Norfolk Historic Environment Service.

## **Acknowledgements**

The author would like to thank Jamie Bird of Blubird Land and Planning Ltd for commissioning the work and Fleur Developments Ltd for funding it

Site work was carried out by Stuart Calow and Suzie Westall.

The finds were washed, recorded and analysed by Lucy Talbot.

The report was edited by Jayne Bown and illustrated and produced by David Dobson.

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### Appendix 1a: Context Summary

Context	Category	Cut Type	Fill Of	Description	Period	Trench
1	Cut	Pit		Pit in Trench 3	Modern	3
2	Deposit		1	Fill of pit [1]	Modern	3
3	Deposit		1	Fill of pit [1]	Modern	3
4	Cut	Ditch		Ditch in Trench 3	Medieval	3
5	Deposit		4	Ditch fill	Medieval	3
6	Cut	Gully		Narrow gully in Trench 4	Unknown	4
7	Deposit		6	Fill of narrow gully [6]	Unknown	4
8	Deposit			Natural layer of orangey-brown silty sand	Unknown	all

### Appendix 1b: OASIS Feature Summary

Period	Feature Type	Total
Medieval	Ditch	1
Modern	Pit	1
Unknown	Gully	1

### Appendix 2a: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Qty	Wt	Period
2	Pottery	11	162g	Modern
2	Ceramic Building Material	1	59g	Modern
2	Animal Bone	9	82g	Unknown
5	Ceramic Building Material	1	25g	Medieval

### Appendix 2b: OASIS Finds Summary

Period	Material	Total
Medieval	Ceramic Building Material	1
Modern	Ceramic Building Material	1
	Pottery	11